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# Battle and Self-Sacrifice in a Bengali Warrior's Epic: Lausen's Quest to be a Raja in Dharma Mañgal, Chapter Six of Rites of Spring by Ralph Nicholas

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## 6. Battle and Self-Sacrifice in a Bengali Warrior's Epic: Lausen's Quest to be a Raja in *Dharma Maṅgal*\*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Plots and Themes

*Dharma Maṅgal* are long, narrative Bengali poems that explain and justify the worship of Lord Dharma as the eternal, formless, and supreme god. Surviving texts were written between the mid-seventeenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries. By examining the plots of *Dharma Maṅgal*, I hope to describe features of a precolonial Bengali warriors' culture. I argue that *Dharma Maṅgal* texts describe the career of a hero and raja, and that their narratives seem to be designed both to inculcate a version of warrior culture in Bengal, and to contain it by requiring self-sacrifice in both battle and "truth ordeals." *Dharma Maṅgal*

\*I thank Ralph W. Nicholas for inviting me to participate in a workshop on Gājan at the University of Chicago in September 2003, the Dean of the College of the University of Chicago for support for travel and expenses during this workshop, and Regenstein Library for making available some texts used in this research. I am indebted to the other participants, Nicholas and Aditi Nath Sarkar, and to Tony K. Stewart, Ramya Sreenivasan, and Alf Hiltebeitel for their comments on earlier drafts. I also thank the Bureau of Faculty Research of Western Washington University for funding a trip to Kolkata in August 2005 for further research on this topic.

texts were performed on the occasion of the spring ritual of the Gājan of Lord Dharma. They provide, as Ralph W. Nicholas writes, “the primary literary authority for performance of the Gājan, insofar as there is one,” whether the ritual is devoted to Dharma or to Śiva. The texts themselves also provide evidence of “Sanskritization” of Dharma’s Gājan. To be sure this was Sanskritization using an entirely vernacular medium, and it was Sanskritization by means of a regionally defined warrior’s model, rather than a peasant model (Srinivas 1969: 6–24). *Dharma Maṅgal* hardly mention concerns about the earth’s fertility which inform many of the rites of the Gājan. Instead, they emphasize the painful physical ordeals which participants undergo. Moreover, *Dharma Maṅgal* usually assimilate Dharma to Viṣṇu rather than to Śiva, and they frequently represent Dharma’s principal worshiper Lausen as parallel to the divine king Lord Rama. Their evidence is quite unlike the evidence of ritual change that Nicholas presents in this volume, which shows assimilation of Dharma to Śiva.

This essay is important for understanding precolonial Bengal, because it questions the colonial and nationalist stereotype that the region of Bengal lacked the *jati* classified as Kṣatriya, and that without them, Hindu Bengali culture lacked heroic roles and martial virtues.<sup>1</sup> In *Dharma Maṅgal* texts some elements of a warrior’s culture seem to have been taken from north India, but others drew upon stereotypes about untouchable *jatis* in Bengal. Inevitably, warrior virtues were represented as masculine, as aspects of “virility.” This essay argues that in their attempts to naturalize a warrior’s culture in Bengal, authors of *Dharma Maṅgal* reveal masculine anxieties about maternal affection for sons, about conjugal love, and about *jati* and gender boundaries. They also assume a natural affinity between untouchable *jati* women and martial virtues, one impossible for high *jati* women.

In analyzing *Dharma Maṅgal* we may begin with common features of their plots, most of which follow a common pattern and can be reduced to a relatively simple outline, if we concentrate on the actions of the hero Lausen. Together with his mother Ranjabati, he was sent to earth to make Dharma’s worship widespread, or to establish a new, “complete” form of that worship. Plots of most *Dharma*

*Maṅgal* present an initial set of problems facing Lausen's father, problems which had their origin before Lausen's birth. His father lost a crucial battle with a man who had rebelled against their common overlord, and therewith he also lost his land and his status as a raja; moreover, his six sons were slain in battle, and both their wives and his wife committed suicide. To make matters worse, he then made an enemy of his overlord's minister by secretly marrying that man's youngest sister, who turned out to be barren. All of the foregoing is the situation into which the hero Lausen is born. To begin the action of the poem, *Dharma Maṅgal* first describe the barren wife's ritual self-sacrifice to Dharma, her restoration to life, and her receipt of the boon of motherhood from Dharma. Lausen's birth, and his education as a warrior follow immediately. With this preparation, Lausen then must prove himself as a warrior against animal and female opponents who test his character and abilities. *Dharma Maṅgal* describe how Lausen uses his capacity as a warrior to become a raja, a local ruler with a new land, Moyna, with a cohort of untouchable Dom warriors under his leadership, and with subjects whom he attracts to his land. His status as a raja, however, is conditioned upon his continuing service as a warrior to his overlord, the king. By engaging in the king's service with his army, Lausen then conquers rebels against his overlord, and wins wives who themselves model different aspects of Lausen's own character, and who complete his status as a raja. Established as a raja, Lausen again must face and slay a much more difficult opponent, the rebel who originally had stolen his father's land and taken away his father's status as a raja. Finally, because of the plotting of the king's minister against him, Lausen must vow to become a renunciate adept and must sacrifice himself to Lord Dharma, partly following his mother's model. In his absence, his subalterns are left to govern and protect his land, and they also must shift their own roles. Dharma restores Lausen to life after his self-sacrifice. Through the virtue of his self-sacrifice, Lausen is able to save his land, defeat the king's minister, and end his obligation of service to the king. Lausen's self-sacrifice provides the model for a "complete" form of worship of Dharma, one "virtuous" and well suited for the great difficulties of the Kālī Age.

France Bhattacharya has analyzed the "narrative structure" of Lausen's story in *Dharma Maṅgal* in terms of two quests. For the first quest, "Dharma is both destinator [i.e., he establishes its purpose]

and beneficiary: he wants his cult to be universally celebrated.” Lausen is sent as the heroic agent to accomplish this task. In the second quest, however, Lausen himself is the destinator, the hero and the beneficiary: he acts to secure the land and throne of Moyna as its raja (Bhattacharya 2000: 365). This second quest, to secure the position of raja of Moyna, provides an interesting contrast to vernacular and regional “martial oral epics” from north and south India which have a plot function of losing a land and throne.<sup>2</sup> Often located in marginal, geographical “shatter zones,” these regional epics seem to register the impact of the Islamic conquest by narrating the failure of heroes to protect the goddess, heroines associated with her, and their land. They conclude tragically, with the destruction of the heroes by the goddess, who must protect the land herself, but the goddess cooperates with establishment of a posthumous cult (Hiltebeitel 2001: 37–43). *Dharma Maṅgal* presents us with an alternative, successful outcome, in part by associating the hero with an alternative primary source of divine support, Lord Dharma rather than the goddess, and in part by constructing an ending in which the hero dies and is restored to life without being slain in battle, and without losing his land and throne.

Turning to the other quest in the plot of *Dharma Maṅgal*, we can note a theme of self-sacrifice through which these texts are related to the most elaborate versions of the spring ritual of Dharma Gājan. Lord Dharma’s support ultimately must be won by Lausen’s self-sacrifice. Lausen cuts each of his limbs off at its two major joints, and then severs his own head from his trunk (it is hard to imagine exactly how this is accomplished). K.P. Chattopadhyay has described “Lauseni” versions of Dharma Gājan in which initiates take the part of Lausen’s companions and enact their imitation of his nine-limb sacrifice by piercing nine parts of their bodies with iron rods to which incense burners are attached (Chattopadhyay 1942: 121–23). Alf Hiltebeitel has argued that self-sacrifice is a feature of another ritual within Dharma Gājan. On the climactic night of the ritual two *loue* goats are sacrificed, one to Dharma and one to Kālī; the name *loue* may be a cognate of “Lau”, and they may be Lausen’s substitutes in the ritual.<sup>3</sup> Hiltebeitel suggests complex analogies between these ritual sacrifices, the piercings and instruments of impalement of adepts in the Gājan, “battlefield rituals” more generally, and the human and animal “sacrifices” of

literal battles (Hiltebeitel 1991:vol 2, 305–8; 373–5). Although *Dharma Maṅgal* trace self-sacrifice to the pious example of divine and human devotees from Indra to King Hariscandra, Hiltebeitel notes that self-sacrifice also can be given “demonic” antecedents, and can be linked to the powers of “demon” warriors. For example, participants in Śiva Gājan have referred to the myth of Banasura to explain the piercing of limbs undertaken by male and female adepts, and in at least one *Dharma Maṅgal* text Ravana is claimed as a worshiper who sacrificed himself to Dharma when he “unflinchingly cut off his own heads as offerings to the Self-existent Brahma” and obtained the boon that he could not be killed by gods or any of a series of beings except men.<sup>4</sup> Lausen’s self-sacrifice also may be similar to “voluntary” human sacrifices to Kālī (Hiltebeitel 1991: vol 2, 187–90).

In *Dharma Maṅgal* Lausen’s quest to be a raja seems to provide the context and motive for his ritual self-sacrifice. Indeed, we will see that his ritual self-sacrifice may be understood as an alternative ordeal to that of battle. We also will see that Lausen was constrained because to assert his independence in battle against his treacherous maternal uncle Mahamad and the army of his overlord Gauesvar would have been “most improper,” an unthinkable violation of *dharma* (Mahapatra 1962: 563), but there are other motivations for self-sacrifice as well, connected to Lausen’s new roles of advisor to and worshiper substituting for the king. That is to say, there are metonymic relations between battle and self-sacrifice in this text, and especially chains of cause and effect, which may be as important as the metaphoric relations Hiltebeitel has suggested.

In this essay, because of its importance for the theme of self-sacrifice, I want to consider the second quest, of Lausen to be a raja. Within this theme I find four topics. The first is the martial culture for Bengal which Lausen models. We will see that at issue is the question of his “virility” (*paurusya*) as a warrior, the disciplines and virtues which make it increase, and the acts by which it can be displayed to “awaken renown” (*yas*), to arrange marriage alliances, to secure military retainers, and to obtain a “land” (*des*), as a permanent and revenue producing grant (*inam*) from the overlord. Contested ideals of a martial masculinity are at the core of this topic. Equally at issue are feminine roles. Naturalizing a martial masculinity

for Bengalis required models for an ideal warrior's wife, which form the second topic I will explore. We will see that two distinct role models for a warrior's wife are constructed in *Dharma Maṅgal*. Both the splitting of women's roles and their associated instability are common features in Rajput heroes' epics (cf. Harlan 2003: 204–13; 1992: 182–204), but in *Dharma Maṅgal* the two roles for women are based upon and similar to a splitting of roles for elite men between warrior and raja on the one hand, and advisor or minister on the other.

Military leaders and retainers also had to be recruited from non-*Kṣatriya jati*. Lausen recruits his commanders from *Ḍoms*, an untouchable *jati* of former pig-herds and basket-weavers who are represented as having martial skills but lacking culture, and both martial skills and lack of culture seem to be grounded in a natural “wildness” that belongs to *Ḍoms* by their inherent nature. Their problematic integration into Lausen's army, city, and land form the third topic. We will see that *Ḍoms* are contrasted with two other “untouchable” groups who provided military specialists to Lausen's opponents, *Candals* and elite, foreign Muslims.

Lausen's relations with human opponents and supporters are mediated by his relations to Lord Dharma and to the goddess. This is the fourth and last topic in my essay. *Dharma Maṅgal* texts motivate Lausen's worship of Lord Dharma by showing his triumph over opponents who had worshiped the goddess. In the rhetoric of the text's plot, the goddess first is re-imagined as a supporter of rebels.<sup>5</sup> The rhetoric against rebellion which criticizes the goddess, however, is only part of a larger rhetorical project to rehabilitate her by placing her under the authority of the supreme male god Dharma. In this larger project, rebel worshipers of the goddess are replaced by some of Lausen's dependents and supporters, who also worship her. An imperial ethic that conceives subaltern independence as rebellion may be one of the core doctrines of *Dharma Maṅgal* texts.

### Authors, Texts and Reading Strategy

Asutosa Bhattacharya describes over twenty authors of *Dharma Maṅgal* texts in his history of *maṅgal kāvya* (Bhattacharya 1975: 725–

76). To be sure, when he revised his text in 1975 many texts he surveyed remained only in manuscript, and a few authors were each represented only by a single, partial manuscript. Not surprisingly, all but one of the authors whose villages can be located came from the Rāṅh, the region west of the Hugli River, for this is where Dharma is worshiped “even now” in popular rites.<sup>6</sup> Among the older texts for which there is both a secure manuscript tradition and a reliable date are those of Rup’ram and Ram’das Adak, who both wrote in 1662/3.<sup>7</sup> One of the two most recent texts is that of Ram’kanta, who wrote in 1750 (Bhattacharya 1975: 740, 769). Dating is especially problematic for the very important text by Manik’ram Ganguli. Bhattacharya proposes 1567; other scholars have suggested 1467, 1569, and sometime after 1694 (the last based on textual evidence, not on a chronogram); his editors, however, defend the improbably late date of 1781 (Bhattacharya 1975: 734–6; Datta and Datta 1960: 8–10). Sukh’may Mukhopadhyay has shown that Manik’ram’s text refers satirically to Ghanaram and so must postdate his *Dharma Maṅgal*, written in 1711. Further, since Manik’ram’s text refers to the image of Madanamohana as present in Visnupur, and since this image was removed to Calcutta during the reign of Nawab Mir Qasim (1760–64), it must predate Mir Qasim’s defeat and the full establishment of British supremacy in Bengal in 1764. Given these constraints, Mukhopadhyay has re-analyzed Manik’ram’s chronogram, and interpreted it as 1674 *Sakabda*, or 1752/3 (Sukh’may Mukhopadhyay 1993: 274–8). If this resolution of Manik’ram’s dates may be accepted, we would have no surviving *Dharma Maṅgal* texts composed after the introduction in 1769 of English Supervisors and therewith the English East India Company’s open assumption of responsibility for government throughout the interior of Bengal. Control of zamindars’ expenses and the demobilization of zamindari armies closely followed this event (Firminger 1962: 188–201, Khan 1969: 275–7). The dates of extant *Dharma Maṅgal* texts then would be consistent with the hypothesis that these texts were composed and performed between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries at least partly in order to naturalize a warrior’s culture in precolonial Bengal. We assume that after the full establishment of British rule in Bengal, this



purpose ceased to be as relevant as it had been during the unsettled years of the first half of the eighteenth century.

There is a greater range of *jatis* of authors than is usual for many other *maṅgal kāvya* texts, and a greater representation of low *jati* authors. Among the latter, we can mention Ram'das Adak, a Kaibarta, Hrdayram Sau, a Suri or palm wine maker or seller, and Śyām Paṇḍit, probably a priest for Ḍoms and for Dharma worship. The formal arrangement of the texts into *pālā* to be recited over a twelve-day period suggests their performance during the twelve days of Dharma's Gājan. Twentieth-century accounts of this ritual stress the participation of Ḍoms and people of other very low ranking *jatis*, both men and women, and the minimal participation of elite *jatis* (Bhattacharya 1975: 694–704). Elsewhere we plan a fuller discussion of the relation between *Dharma Maṅgal* performances and Dharma Gājan, but here we can assume that audiences at least included the low *jati* participants in the annual ritual of Dharma Gājan.

Among authors, for the sake of this essay I will consider in detail Ram'das Adak, whose home was in Bhursut pargana (in undivided Hugli District), who wrote in 1662, and was rewarded by a relative of the zamindar with the position of diwan or steward of his household (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 23–5); Ghanaram Cakrabartti, who wrote in 1711, and was a Brahman probably patronized by Kirticandra Ray, the zamindar of Barddhaman (Mahapatra 1962: 7–9); and in considerably less detail, Narasimha Basu, a Kayastha, who well before writing had been the *vakil* or legal agent of Nawab Asadullah Khan, the zamindar of Birbhum, and who wrote in 1737 (Maiti c2001: 50–58). The close relation between these authors and zamindari courts is suggestive, but may be accidental. My intent has been to pick authors with secure dates, from different locations, and representing a range of *jatis*. I have not attempted to analyze changes over time in how the story was told.

I will approach these texts with a multi-layered reading strategy. First, in isolating Lausen's quest to secure the position of raja, I will emphasize explicit assumptions about stages and problems in a warrior's and raja's career. Second, I have found it useful to compare Lausen's successive roles in the narrative with roles of his several

opponents and subalterns. This structural analysis of roles reveals less conscious assumptions shared by many authors. Third, I specifically will compare the versions of Ghanaram and of Ram'das Adak for their use of rhetoric, not just in persuasive speeches of characters and their own occasional authorial comments, but also in the subtle shadings by which they shape our judgments of characters and their deeds (Book 1961). I will be especially interested in the character of Kālu Ḍom, as a focus for divergent rhetorical interests of high—and low-*jati* authors. For this set of questions I will introduce evidence from a text which is not dateable, that of Mayur Bhatta, because it contains descriptions of the Ḍoms that connect them to uncleared forests.<sup>8</sup> Fourth, I will pay some attention to the performative pleasures of *Dharma Maṅgal* texts, and especially to satirical and comic pleasures. I am interested in what they may suggest about anxieties of contemporary male audiences. Finally, I will argue that authors of *Dharma Maṅgal* made many contextual references to Bengali and Sanskrit texts, and especially to episodes in *Caṇḍī Maṅgal* and in the *Ramayana*, and I therefore will refer to these contexts to help determine didactic purposes of *Dharma Maṅgal*. We now can turn to a detailed analysis of the plot. Part I describes requirements for becoming a warrior, and Part II discusses additional requirements for becoming a raja. Part III contrasts Lausen's battlefield sacrifices as a warrior and raja to his self-sacrifice to Lord Dharma as a renunciate adept, and as an advisor to and substitute for his overlord.

## PART I: BECOMING A WARRIOR

### Parents and Enemies

Lausen's father is Karṇa Sen, a weak and aged man with two powerful enemies. In the first half of the narrative his enemies in turn acquire a larger arena for their actions, and pose an increasing threat to Lausen because of the moral and political weaknesses of Lausen's superior ruler, the king and overlord of Bengal, whose capital is Gaur and whose only appellation is Gauresvar, the "lord of Gaur."

The first of his father's two enemies is Ichai Ghos (hereafter

Ghosh), a Gop or Goyala (Cowherd, a *sat-Sudra jati* in Bengal)<sup>9</sup> and a rebel against Gauresvar. With the encouragement of the goddess he had seized Karṇa Sen's original land of Dhekur, had forced him into exile, and had begun to withhold the king's taxes well before Lausen was born.<sup>10</sup> Ichai was an enemy of the patrilineage into which Lausen was born, and an enemy of their common overlord, Gauresvar. According to Ram'das Adak, Ichai's powerful, tantric worship of the goddess offended against the *dharma* of kingship, for his untouchable Candal guards stole boys for sacrifice from his own subjects (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 17). Ghanaram describes the moral disorder of Ichai's kingdom under the goddess in terms of a reversal of predatory relations among animals. By the effects of dirt from a wrestling arena (*bir'mati*) which she gave him, frogs in his kingdom ate snakes, mice and garter snakes ate cats, and mongooses ran away from lizards. Note that this extraordinary image makes those who are powerful by nature legitimate, and it makes the goddess on the contrary support rebellions from below (Mahapatra 1962: 36). For Lausen, Ichai Ghosh was a mortal enemy with whom there could be no compromise; he had to be killed in battle.

Karṇa Sen's second enemy's name is given variously as Mahamad or Maudiya in different texts, the first of which names suggests egotistical "madness" at the same time that it puns on "Muhammad".<sup>11</sup> He was the king Gauresvar's chief minister or counselor (*patra*), as well as the king's wife's brother (the king's *sala*), and secretly he reversed the proper hierarchy for both relationships and kept the king under his own control. Plot details in Ram'das Adak's account show his reliance on the support of "*mughal-pathan*," elite non-Indian Muslim soldiers, especially when he wanted soldiers to commit acts which offend against *dharma*.<sup>12</sup> The enmity between Karṇasen and this man is explained by a new marriage relation between them, which made Mahamad inferior to Karṇa Sen.

After Ichai had usurped Lausen's father's land, and before Lausen's birth, the minister Mahamad had led an army against Ichai Ghosh. The army included Karṇasen, Lausen's father, and his six grown half-brothers (by a different mother than Lausen's mother Ranjabati). Ichai had routed the army, and the six sons of

Karṇasen had been killed; Mahamad and Karṇasen escaped with their lives. After this disaster, the wives of Karṇasen's six sons had immolated themselves, and their mother had committed suicide or died from grief.

Karṇasen himself then took the vows of a yogi, intending to abandon worldly life, but the king Gauresvar secretly convinced Karṇasen to marry the youngest sister of his own wife, the queen. This bride was Ranjabati, also the youngest sister of the minister Mahamad. For the minister, even the shame of his recent defeat by Ichai Ghosh was less than the shame of becoming unwittingly a wife-giver, a *sala* to Karṇasen, and thus his inferior. He secretly vowed to keep Karṇasen and Ranjabati in the cursed condition of being without sons, and after Lausen's miraculous birth, he attempted to fulfill that promise by kidnapping the baby (Mahapatra 1962: 40–46; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 19–24). Despite this and other attempts to kill Lausen, the maternal uncle remains an enemy who cannot properly be killed.<sup>13</sup> Instead, he finally must be defeated in a kind of ordeal, the act that will require Lausen's ritual self-sacrifice.

Before Lausen's birth the plot thus eliminates his six elder brothers. In some versions, Lausen interacts with no other living members of his patrilineage except his aged father and his younger brother Karpur.<sup>14</sup> In any case, the plot by which Lausen eventually triumphs denies him assistance from most of his patrilineage, and emphasizes instead his maternal relatives, both as supporters and as opponents. The plot simultaneously gives Lausen one enemy within his extended family (the minister), and another outside his extended family (Ichai Ghosh, the rebel). Moreover, Mahamad, the minister and Lausen's maternal uncle, is himself doubly an enemy from within, for he has control of the king to whom Lausen will be expected to remain loyal and obedient. Of course, this overlord, Gauresvar, is also a relative (he is Lausen's *meso*, his mother's sister's husband),<sup>15</sup> but his natural weaknesses, and his subjection to the minister's control make him an unreliable and sometimes even a treacherous ally. The plot therefore eliminates effective support from Lausen's patrilineage, while it gives him both a powerful enemy and an unreliable ally among his maternal relatives.

The mother and son, Ranjabati and Lausen, are the only human

characters in *Dharma Maṅgal* who had heavenly lives before coming to earth.<sup>16</sup> In the most general statement, the divine purpose for their being born on earth was to “announce” or to “make the worship (*pūjā*) of Dharma wide-spread” (*pracar*) (Cattopadhyaya 1932: 12b, 58a; compare Maiti c2001: 12, 13). A more specific statement of purpose, however, is that “by Lausen’s asceticism (*tapasyay*) Dharma’s *baramati* will be complete (*paripurna*)” (Mahapatra 1962: 26, 107). The complete *baramati* refers to a twelve-day rite devoted to worship of Lord Dharma, which Ghanaram prescribes for the Kālī Age. Mother and son are doubly linked by worship. First, unable to conceive normally, Ranjabati worshiped Dharma for the birth of Lausen, and second, for both mother and son Dharma’s worship ultimately required an act of ritual self-sacrifice. Lausen and Ranjabati, however, did not introduce either the simpler rite of the Gājan or self-sacrifice as worship of Dharma. Rather, in her introduction to Dharma’s worship Ranjabati witnessed the Gājan being performed by a group of lower *jati* men and women who had come to the palace, and later both mother and son learned the procedures for self-sacrifice from a female adept (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 32a, 43a, 44b, 46, 230b; Mahapatra 1962: 62, 91–92, 96, 571–77, 669). Making Dharma’s worship “widespread” implicitly meant its adoption by higher *jati* worshipers, and it may have involved the introduction of a longer and more complex rite, the “complete” *baramati*.

Ranjabati’s ritual self-sacrifice was accomplished on a board pierced with iron or steel spikes, upon which she jumped, and by means of which her body was impaled and cut in pieces.<sup>17</sup> Lausen cut his own limbs in eight pieces with his sword, and then cut off his own head. Both ritual acts gave the dead devotees indirect power over Dharma in his remote place in heaven. The sin of a woman’s slaughter created by Ranjabati’s death took the form of a dark-skinned, copper-haired, Rahu-like demon, and chased the Sun from his path in the sky. Unable to follow the Sun to Dharma’s heaven, that sin filled Earth and made her tremble. When Sun complained about this, Dharma was “shaken” and “disturbed,” and came to intervene on Earth’s behalf.<sup>18</sup> Precisely parallel descriptions are given to explain Dharma’s intervention after Lausen’s self-sacrifice,

but this time his death was accompanied by that of a cow, a woman, and a Brahman, and all these respective “sins” caused Earth, all the gods, and Dharma himself to tremble and Dharma’s mind to be vexed (Mahapatra 1962: 674; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 232b).

The miraculous story of his birth gives Lausen an identity that emphasizes his mother’s heroic role in his birth, his own identity as a hero born to a heroic mother, and his future self-sacrifice as a devotee of Dharma.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps as both hero and devotee of Dharma, Lausen is his mother’s son more than his father’s. Of course, a son’s devotion to his mother should be more important than to his father,<sup>20</sup> but we also will note potential problems in his mother’s overly protective love. Finally, regarding his birth, we may ask, what is Lausen’s *jati*? Ram’das Adak identifies Lausen’s maternal grandfather as the “chief of *Vaiśyas*” or merchants, but several texts occasionally give Lausen the title of *saodagar* or “large scale merchant”, even though he never engages in trade in the action of the poem.<sup>21</sup> Of the authors I have read, only Manik’ram identifies Lausen’s father as belonging to a “line of *kṣatriyas*”, and we will see that he intervenes elsewhere in the story to defend Lausen’s honor (Datta and Datta 1960: 98). In any case, we have seen that Lausen’s identity as a warrior and hero was achieved, not simply assigned to him by his *jati*.

Karpur, Lausen’s one surviving and younger brother, also is identified as his minister or counselor (*pattar*, *patra*). Especially during the brothers’ first journey to Gaur, undertaken to display virility and win renown, Karpur is satirized for his fear in the face of danger, but texts also relate that he knew the history of all the opponents Lausen met, and consistently gave good, although sometimes overly prudent, advice. When the two brothers returned in triumph he again is satirized for claiming more than his share of glory, but throughout the narrative there never is a question that he loves and worships Lausen and will serve him faithfully. As a loyal and faithful minister, his character is a foil for Lausen’s maternal uncle, the evil minister of Lausen’s overlord Gauresvar.

Plot devices of *Dharma Maṅgal* clearly reveal three roles for the hero Lausen: he becomes a warrior, a *raja*, and an ascetic or renouncer (*yati*, *sannyasi*) who can secure the intervention of Lord Dharma, the supreme and original deity. His brother Karpur defines

a final role as Lausen's minister. Less obviously, before and during his self-sacrifice, Lausen also begins to give advice to Gauresvar, and to share some of his roles as a "great king," his overlord. Lausen's roles are linked by shared virtues of truthfulness, righteousness, and the use and control of violence, including the violence of ritual self-sacrifice in an ordeal to prove his "truth." Each of these four roles—warrior, raja, minister, and ascetic worshiper who undergoes an ordeal—has an evil or morally inferior counter role, and collectively the four counter roles are shared among Lausen's opponents. These eight roles will provide us with the basis for a structural analysis of the narrative.

### Wrestling, Maternal Love, and "Virility"

*Dharma Maṅgal* texts suggest that a warrior's culture can be revived in Bengal through training in a wrestling arena (*akhara*). According to Ram'das Adak, Lausen and his brother first were given a typically Bengali, bookish, and Brahmanic education. They learned the alphabet, reading, and arithmetic "as is the rule for rajas" (note this evidence that by the mid-seventeenth century rajas had to be able to keep accounts). Then they mastered exoteric and esoteric Hindu subjects: Purāṇas, astrology, Vedas, and "*mantra-tantra*" (the sounds, diagrams and techniques which align powers of the cosmos with those of the body). Their father Karṇasen, however, was not happy. He wanted to teach his boys the art of wrestling "since they are the sons of a king" (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 65–6). According to Ghanaram, he reasoned: "When a powerful enemy continually makes the heart stricken with anguish, might and energy (*prabal-pratap*) are the allies of all . . . ." (Mahapatra 1962: 141). Restitution of Karṇasen's lost patrimony would require education in the techniques of "might and energy."

Karṇasen sought a man qualified to teach his sons. According to Ghanaram, Karṇasen brought many wrestlers to his court, but all of them "trembled in their thighs when they beheld their pupil Lausen, who looked like a manifest deity" (Mahapatra 1962: 141). Another problem may have been that the most famous wrestler was too far away, and fetching him would involve a long delay (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 66a; Datta and Datta 1960: 116). All texts



insist on giving Lausen and Karpur the most qualified divine instructor, Hanuman, the patron deity of wrestling, who came in disguise at the direction of Dharma himself. Wrestlers worship Hanuman because he embodies *sakti*, a subtle “energy” which supports purely muscular strength, and which “is regarded as emanating from a confluence of physical strength, devotion, self-realization, and self-control.” They also worship Hanuman because he is a perfect model of *bhakti* to Lord Rama, and a perfect practitioner of celibacy (Alter 1992: 205, 198–213).

We may omit most of the particular topics of the boys’ instruction in wrestling, but we must understand its overall purpose, and the ancillary disciplines this instruction imposed. Before Hanuman (in disguise) had begun to teach them, he told his two pupils and their parents that long ago he had “sold this head to the feet of Rama and Janaki” (Sita) and that since then he “paid no heed to the command, might, or virility (*ajna prataṭ paurusa*) of any other.” Later, after Lausen had recognized that this guru in wrestling was Hanuman, he thanked his mother for bringing him Hanuman as fruit of her virtue, “for such a lord has shown mercy and increased my virility” (Mahapatra 1962: 142, 145). The word which I translate as “virility” in these two passages is *paurusa* (sic. for *paurusya*). Literally it means “masculinity,” but in the *Dharma Maṅgal* texts I am considering it always is used in the sense of a heroic masculinity, and sometimes may best be translated as “heroism” or even as a warrior’s “honor.” I argue that the rhetoric of *Dharma Maṅgal* texts is designed to emphasize the “virility” needed to exercise violence and at the same time to uphold *dharma* in the relations between rajas and their overlord, and between rajas and their military retainers and subjects (Bhattacharya 2000: 366–73).

*Dharma Maṅgal* texts do not explicitly indicate insistence on sexual abstinence and semen retention, a rule for trainees in wrestling which has been described as the “single most important aspect of a wrestler’s regimen” (Alter 1992: 129–35). All texts, however, assume this rule in the episode that immediately follows. One day in the month of *Asvin*, when in Bengal *Durgā Pūjā* universally is celebrated, the goddess descended to earth to observe her worship. Surprised to see no festival in her honor in the wrestling grounds where Lausen and Karpur diligently were continuing their



exercises, she resolved either to obtain recognition and worship from Lausen or to seduce him. Her attempted seduction tested Lausen's "knowledge" (*jnan*) by using her arts of sexual allure (*napan*) (Mahapatra 1962: 154). Lausen insisted that from birth he never had touched a young woman, and that her duty was to go home and devotedly to worship (to have sex with) her husband.<sup>22</sup> He also recognized her as the goddess, worshiped her with appropriate songs of praise, and when she granted him a boon, he insisted on and received her demon-destroying sword (*asi*) or falchion (*kharga*) (Mahapatra 1962:164; Cattopadhyaya 1938:73b). Thus, successfully resisting seduction caused an increase of this young warrior's virility and honor.

Of course, heroes must have divine weapons, and in the next episode Lausen also is provided with a shield made by Visvakarma (this is accomplished at Dharma's own direction to match the sword given Lausen by the goddess). Thus prepared by a divine education by Hanuman, and equipped with divine weapons, Lausen was ready to commence his career as a warrior. The boys therefore proposed a journey to Gaur, to introduce themselves to their maternal relative Mahamad, and to Gauresvar and his court. It is worth attending to the motives for this decision. Certainly Lausen hoped to please the king and to receive some economic reward in return.<sup>23</sup> A related motive was gaining renown by testing and proving Lausen's virility. Karpur argued:

How shall someone like you just stay at home? If in making known your own virtues, you display your virility (*prakāśa paurusa*), you will awaken renown and praise (*yas kirti*) throughout the world and the world will become subject to your control (*jagat habe bas*) (Mahapatra 1962: 178).

Ultimately, displaying virility would please Gauresvar and cause him to grant Lausen land as a revenue-producing grant (*inam*).<sup>24</sup> Thus the theme of displaying virility maps out goals which must be achieved in the first stage of a successful warrior's career.

His mother Rañjābatī, however, initially attempted to thwart her boys' plans. The plot's images in this episode betray intense fears of the deforming and disempowering consequences of an overly protective maternal love, for Rañjābatī conspired with her brother, the chief minister, to bring a wrestler to Moyna who would make

her boys “cripples” (*khorā*), by breaking an arm and a leg of each son. Then they would forget about leaving home! (The minister in turn conspired with the wrestlers to kill his two nephews.) Lausen’s two battles with these wrestlers mark his passage from a childhood protected by his mother to adulthood. Ram’das Adak’s *Dharma Maṅgal* narrates that after an initially equal encounter, Lausen lost his first contest with the chief wrestler, because “his age was still a boy’s, and his strength ebbed away.”<sup>25</sup>

Hanuman, at the command of Dharma, intervened to restore Lausen to wholeness and to give him the full strength of a divinely aided hero (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 84b; Mahapatra 1962: 190). The second contest therefore had the opposite conclusion. Lausen killed all the wrestlers who had come in a body to contest with him. It is significant that before this victory Ram’das Adak begins to call Lausen “raja,” just when Hanuman transformed him by his touch (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 84b). Of course, literally he was not yet a raja. He had neither recognition from his overlord, nor a land, nor subjects, nor even renown beyond Moyna; but he did have a thorough education in wrestling, a proven record of chastity, divine weapons, and divine energy acquired from the touch of Hanuman, the patron deity of wrestlers. All these he would need to display virility, to win renown and to become a raja.

### The Intertextuality of Animal and Female Rebels

With reluctant permission from their mother, the two brothers set out for Gaur. This journey has some similarities to Rama’s exile to the forest with his younger brother Lakṣmana, but perhaps in the eighteenth century Moyna itself was thought to have been located in a forest. Although there were two possible locations for “Moyna,” Moynapur in Bankura and Moyna in Midnapur, both Ghanaram’s and Ram’das Adak’s texts suggest the latter location.<sup>26</sup> James Rennell’s map shows this “Myna” as an island and fort in an unnamed river, on the road between “Tamlook” and “Narangur” (Narayangar), but for the whole pargana of Moyna he located only a few settlements, mostly to the south of the fort, along the “Culliaghi” (Keleghai) and “Tingorcally” (now the Haladi) rivers. Indeed all of southeastern Midnapur appears to have been very sparsely settled.

On the way to Gaur, at least when Rennell mapped Midnapur and Burdwan, perhaps Lausen would have entered well-settled land only north of “Gattaul” (Ghatal), where a road leading north to Burdwan begins on Rennell’s map.<sup>27</sup> In any case, Lausen and Karpur were traveling not so much through forest as away from it.<sup>28</sup> Still, in episodes modeled on the *Aranyakanda* of the *Ramayana*,<sup>29</sup> the boys met creatures who had to be killed or punished because (like Viradha, Kadamba, and Surpanakha) they enacted either an indiscriminating and predatory violence, or a total abandonment to lust (Pollock 1991: 71–84). Unlike the *Ramayana*’s creatures, however, Lausen’s enemies did not belong to a primeval forest. One possible problem that may be raised by *Dharma Maṅgal* texts is, how does the career of a hero change when the internal frontier has closed, and “forest” has almost disappeared?<sup>30</sup>

Two enemies are animals, and two are women. I will treat in detail the first animal, and the second woman, because they establish models for understanding Lausen’s two major opponents, Ichai Ghosh and Mahamad the minister. The first animal was a tiger, Kamadal. Ram’das Adak provides a story of his prior, heavenly life, and the actions that caused his rebirth as a tiger; this story names lust as the karmic cause for the tiger’s subsequent life of predatory violence.<sup>31</sup> In any case, the story that follows is a political fable about the nature of rebels, and rebels are one evil or morally privative alternative to righteous warriors and rajas.

One day Jallal Sikhar, the king of Jalandha, discovered an orphaned tiger cub attempting to suckle his dead mother, and he brought the cub home to be fed on buffalo milk and other vegetarian food. The cub, however, quickly discovered his taste for meat, and naturally began to hunt—first pigeons, jungle fowl, and geese, then cats, dogs, goats, pigs, sheep and buffalo calves, and finally children of the royal city. By the inborn fault of tiger’s nature (*jeter svabhab dose*) it was very cruel and violent (*khal*). The lesson is clear: “putting faith in someone who is faithless necessarily produces evil fruit” (Mahapatra 1962: 215). The king, however, trapped and caged Kamadal, and began to weaken him by starvation, but did not kill him.

Immediately thereafter, for a second failure, in this case to render proper worship to a yogi, Jallal Sikhar was cursed by Śiva to

suffer total destruction by means of a creature of the forest.<sup>32</sup> According to Ghanaram, the goddess therefore opened the lock securing Kamadal's cage, and gave him the boon that he would be "independent (*svatantar*) by reason of strength, intelligence, and heroism" (*bal buddhi bikrame*) (Mahapatra 1962: 223). Because of Jallal's two failures to act as a proper king, a cruel and violent creature was released from a royal prison, and then began to slay and eat everyone he caught, young and old, Hindu and Muslim, and high and low. He entered the palace and killed all of the king's slaves, and the queen herself (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 92–3; Mahapatra 1962: 224–9).

This rebellion ought to have been suppressed. Jallal Sikhar fled to Gaur, and Gauresvar prepared an army to hunt the tiger, but Kamadal was so fearsome that the royal army "broke," and the king fled with his life. By the boon or the blessing of the goddess, the tiger was left literally "sitting on the throne" of Jalandha, ruler over a completely empty city and land.<sup>35</sup> As a fable of rebellion we may note the tiger's connection to a royal city, his protection first by the king and then by a boon from the goddess, the failure of Gauresvar to end his rebellion, and the subsequent depopulation of the city, and the reversion of a well-settled and fertile land to forest.

In this fable there is a clear intertextual reference to *Caṇḍī Maṅgal* texts, and in particular to the story of the founding of a kingdom by Kalketu, the untouchable hunter. Commanded by the goddess to abandon hunting as a livelihood, to take her treasure as a store of capital, to clear the forest of Gujarat, and to found a peaceful kingdom, Kalketu discovered that he himself first would have to kill the tiger of this forest before any woodcutters would agree to his hire.<sup>34</sup> In *Caṇḍī Maṅgal* the untouchable king Kalketu and the tiger are opposed to each other, and the tiger must be killed. In *Dharma Maṅgal* the low-caste king Ichai Ghosh and the tiger are similar in many ways, and both must be killed. In both *maṅgal kāvya*, a tiger defines the boundary between wild forest and cultivated and settled lands. In *Caṇḍī Maṅgal* the goddess arranges to clear a forest on the agrarian frontier and to establish a kingdom in order to prevent the violence of hunting; in *Dharma Maṅgal* she causes a kingdom to revert to the wildness of forest where the only relation is between hunter and hunted. In *Dharma Maṅgal*, finally, we seem

to have an assumption that frontiers have closed, that land in general already has been made subject to human cultivation. Something like a forest therefore re-emerges when multiple failures of kingship allow a rebel tiger, protected by the goddess, to depopulate a once fertile and populated locality.<sup>35</sup> Common to both texts is the idea that the goddess protects and governs localities (Bhattacharya 1981: 17–53).

There also are clear intertextual references to the *Ramayana*. In telling how Lausen defeated Kamadal, *Dharma Maṅgal* texts suggest analogies among the tiger, Ravana the demon king of Lanka, and Ichai Ghosh. All three were given boons that appeared to grant them, if not immortality, at least protection from the most likely assailants or weapons. These boons inevitably left loopholes, since it is not possible to enumerate all possible means of death, and indeed the boons intentionally may have deceived in their assurances of protection.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Kamadal and Ichai both achieved “liberation” and were reborn to heavenly life after they were killed by Lausen. Lausen’s punishments of female opponents, however, do not bring them liberation.

Immediately after defeating the tiger, Lausen and Karpur confronted two seductive women. The second encounter more clearly displays the full range and depth of patriarchal anxiety about women on display in *Dharma Maṅgal*. In this second encounter Lausen’s opponent was Suriksa, the “dancer” (*nati*, *natini*) and queen of Golahat. Lausen came into her custody because he had offended against the laws of a marketplace over which she ruled. She was:

... a woman raja [of the city of Golahat] in which courtesans therefore had settled. She knew many magic arts and many *yogas*, and she enjoyed the pleasure which hundreds of thousands felt in her song and dance. At Kamrup at the seat of the goddess (*siddhapithe*) she had worshiped with the intent that she would be able to entrance the whole world by her gaze. As maidservant (*ceri*) [of the goddess at Kamrup], she could entrance the mind of a sage and turn a man into a sheep by the burning touch of her roll of *pan*. Suriksa had a hundred and twenty male servants who “served her without wages because of their love” (Mahapatra 1962: 276–7).

As matriarch, “dancer” and sexual manipulator of men, Suriksa

certainly was an evil or morally privative character, but if a rebel, she was different from Kamadal. Rather than opposing warriors by force of arms, she attempted to manipulate them through their uncontrolled desires. Her actions were intended to make Lausen violate his vow of chastity.<sup>37</sup> She first offered to be Lausen's servant, to give him 120 male servants, and to let him enjoy every pleasure. Lausen said, quoting a familiar proverb, "Seeing a courtesan (*dari*) is auspicious, but touching one is a great sin, and a prostitute (*besye*) is as full of blame as a flower that grows on a cremation ground" (Mahapatra 1962: 292). Suriksa then proposed a contest for his freedom. She would set him problems or riddles (*heyali samasya*). If he answered them, he would go free (many versions add to this forfeit that he also would have the right to punish Suriksa with facial mutilation). If he did not answer them, he would become her husband and king, or would take food from her and spend the night with her and lose his *jati*.<sup>38</sup> In one version she boasts that her sexual partners all have been won in this way.<sup>39</sup>

The riddle that Suriksa ultimately set confounded Lausen; indeed, eventually it confounded all the male gods in heaven including Lord Dharma. It has two somewhat different versions. The more complex one, in Ram'das Adak's words, is:

[When] divine images (*pratimā*) are made of clay, stone and so on, for the male (*purus*) tell where his life-breath (*prāṇa*) is seated. [When] Kam-Canḍi of Kamakhya comes to Kamakhya, tell where the female's essential humor (*dhaut*, i.e., *dhatu*) is seated (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 119a).

"Kamakhya" provides a number of clues about the context and nature of this riddle. It is the sacred site in Kamrup (Gauhati, Assam) where Satī's *yonī* fell to earth, as her husband Śiva dismembered her dead body. The *yonī* of the goddess is said to have taken the form of a "great block of red arsenic" when it fell to earth, and this stone oozes reddish water in August-September, when the goddess has her menses. Tantric adepts at the site consume this "uterine blood" (White 1996: 195–9). Kamakhya is a site at which both mercury and red arsenic occur naturally; in alchemical traditions the former is homologized to the semen of Śiva, and both substances once were combined, manipulated, and consumed as an elixir (White 1996: 115, 196, 263–94). The site also is identified with the

*mūladhara cākrā* in the subtle body of the goddess, where the coiled energy of the *kuṇḍalini* resides. It, therefore, is identified with the origin of Kaula Yoga and all the practices of “left-handed” tantra by which the *kundalini* can be aroused, and moved upward in the subtle body of the yogi (White 1996: 134–9, 223, 235). Finally, Kamakhya is the name of the goddess of this site and its temple, and Kam-Canḍī seems to be an alternative name for her. In any case, these associations suggest that an answer to the riddle would be either the sexual organ of the goddess, or the powerful physical substances or the subtle energies associated with it.

A similar, but more humanly erotic riddle is given by Ghanaram:

Let's see you tell me about the erotic passion (*adiras*) in a woman's body. When making love, where is her essential humor seated, where does it always stay, and by what virtue (*gun*) is it kept there? (Mahapatra 1962: 305)

Despite its exemplary completeness, Lausen's education apparently had not included anything about “essential humors,” (Mahapatra 1962: 310) nor anything about the arts of sculpting and enlivening divine images, (Maiti c2001: 151a-b) and certainly neither he nor Karpur knows anything about the arts of love (Mahapatra 1962: 305).

Only the goddess can answer such a riddle. Śiva found out the answer from her, and told Dharma, who told Hanuman, who told Lausen. In Ghanaram's version the goddess said: “Listen, Lord, the humor is seated in her eyes. A woman makes a man enchanted by aiming sidelong glances. At the time of lovemaking that humor is united with her husband” (Mahapatra 1962: 310). In Narasimha Basu's account, she says that a woman's essential substance is seated in her “pair of eyes” (*yugal cakse*) (Maiti c2001: 157a). In Ram'das Adak's version the full answer to the double riddle, requiring locations for “life-breath” (*prāṇa*) of the male and “essential humor” (*dhatu*) of the female, is:

It [*prāṇa*?] is not a bird, and is not winged, but is the infant within the egg. It has neither arms nor legs, but strikes to death by a sidelong glance. It is that which sees everyone without being seen. It [*dhatu*?] is that most valuable jewel which is carefully preserved. It is the vermilion in the parting of the hair and the eye's collyrium. It oozes like the eye's tears. Kam-Canḍī of Kamakhya came to Kamakhya; go and say that a woman's essential humor is seated in her left eye (*bam cakse*) (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 122a).



Both male and female images are enlivened, in part by being endowed with vision (*cakṣura dāna*), but in this passage we easily detect references to feminine sexual substances and their cosmetic homologues, before the deliberately surprising and only apparently asexual solution to the riddle. The left eye is the sinister, unlucky eye. In Sanskrit *vama* also means “lovely,” and *vama-locana* is a compound meaning “a woman whose eyes are beautiful, a beautiful woman.” *Vama*, however, also is a name of both Śiva and Kāma, and these meanings introduce convergent connotations for the “eye of Śiva” and the “eye of Kāma.” The fiery third eye of Śiva by which he burnt Kāma to ashes is itself a kind of male *yonī*. Similarly, the term *kamaksa*, the “eye of Kāma,” is in yogic texts the subtle body’s homologue of the female sexual organ, located in the four-petaled lotus of the lowest *cakra*, the *muladhara* or *adhara cakra*.<sup>40</sup> In any case an analogy between eyes and vulvas would have been well known from the myth about Indra and Ahalya.<sup>41</sup> Surikṣa acknowledged her defeat, and either Karpur or Lausen immediately executed a punishment of facial mutilation, cutting off her nose and eyes, her ears, nose and eyes, or her nose, eyes, and hair. In every account Surikṣa’s punishment includes putting out her eyes, the riddle’s solution, even when this exceeds the punishment stipulated as her forfeit. Moreover, the punishment of Surikṣa is equated with Lakṣmana’s punishment of Surpanakha, even though he had cut off only the *raksasi*’s ears and nose (Mahapatra 1962: 311; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 122b; Maiti c 2001: 157a; compare *Ramayana*, *Aranyaka* 17.20–21).

Of course, a certain kind of male audience may well have experienced pleasure both in this bowdlerized solution to the riddle and in its bloody outcome, including a suggestion of sexual mutilation. Patriarchal anxiety is assuaged by a dramatic representation of misogynist violence. Note that this anxiety has been occasioned not just by temptations which threaten a young ascetic warrior’s discipline of sexual abstinence, but also by the easily imagined possibility that men have failed to establish full patriarchal control over women (thus the matriarchy of Golahat), and by the suspicion that this failure of control in turn has occurred because men do not (and perhaps cannot) know the secrets of female sexuality.



*Dharma Maṅgal* share many misogynist themes with literature of the Gorakh Nath yogis (Maiti c2001: 8–12). The sequence of incidents we just have discussed, in which Lausen resists seduction by the goddess, journeys to a matriarchal city of women, and then resists seduction by the queen of that city, is an inverse of stories in the Nath literature in which Matsyendranath (who was also the transmitter of the Kaula tantra) failed to resist seduction by the goddess, and then was cursed to fall under the entrancing power of women in the “Kingdom of the Plantain Forest,” a matriarchal “kingdom of women” where he was the only man. Gorakhnath, who was both Matsyendranath’s pupil and his teacher, had to awaken and rescue Matsyendranath and punish the seductive women, by transforming them into bats (White 2003: 223, 236–7). In contrast Lausen, who in this episode calls himself Dharma’s servant (*kinkar*) and renouncer (*sannyasi*) (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 122b) but not a yogi, is tempted neither by women nor by left-handed tantra. Despite rich associations with other misogynist texts, however, the story of Suriksa defines a role—seducer and manipulator from the position of inferior—which can be taken by men as well as women. I will argue that her role is analogous to that of Mahamad the minister.

The brothers finally proceeded to Gaur, where the chief minister, hoping to kill or at least to discredit Lausen, imposed two final tests.<sup>42</sup> When both tests had been passed the two boys were praised by the king and then taken to the women’s quarters of the palace and introduced to the queen, their mother’s sister (*masi*), as intimate relatives of the royal family. The intended introduction to Gauresvar, their mother’s sister’s husband (*meso*) thus was accomplished, and the expected rewards from this relation would follow.

## PART II: BECOMING A RAJA

### Acquiring a Land and Soldiers

As analyzed by David H.A. Kolff, in north Indian folklore a young man’s career—at least for herdsmen, traders, and warriors—begins with an initiatory journey, and for such young men, separation from home requires observing ascetic norms. Especially for a warrior, celibacy is required during his first military campaign (and probably

during all others). “Only abstinence can protect a man against the risks of his warlike pursuits.” The warrior’s celibacy, however, should be “temporary and reversible.” When he returns home from a successful campaign, he will be expected to begin or to resume family life with increased potency. (We certainly should keep in mind the fact that in Gājan, male and female *bhaktas* also take a vow of temporary celibacy for the duration of their participation in the rite.)<sup>43</sup> Successful military campaigns result in the young warrior’s acquisition both of new brides and of new allies, by his entering into marriage alliances. Marriage alliances in turn are not possible “unless the measure is taken of the participants” physical force and ascetic power” through military campaigns.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, the warrior should acquire and settle a land and rule its people as its raja. Gauresvar gave Lausen the land of Moyna immediately after Lausen’s successful introduction to the family of the overlord. The gift of land seems out of order, since Lausen did not have a military following, but it immediately was made conditional and problematic by Lausen’s maternal uncle, Mahamad the minister. In order to keep Lausen in his power, the minister made him a royal servant (*cakar*), and for a salary he recorded on a written royal order (*par’oana*) the income-producing grant of land (*jagir*) in Moyna worth 100,000 rupees “in the name of Lausen the great hero.”<sup>45</sup> The gift of land thus became conditional upon Lausen’s service to his overlord. *Dharma Maṅgal* commonly use the expression “repaying the king’s salt” to express the obligation to obey a lord or an overlord,<sup>46</sup> but was Lausen’s obligation to obey equally dependent on the righteous conduct of the overlord, or was it an unconditional obligation of Mughal fealty? (Kolff 1990:19–20; J.F. Richards 1998: 285–326)

Historical traditions of successful warrior lineages reveal processes by which an outstanding warrior could become a lineage chief, and ultimately a raja, by attracting soldiers willing to follow his leadership. For lineage chiefs success in battle seems to have been the crucial test, not lineage purity, even for securing rule over a land and control of its revenues (Kolff 1990: pp. 88–95). Alf Hiltebeitel has shown that several north and south Indian oral epics about warrior chiefs portray low status companions in critical roles, both supporting and endangering their chiefs.<sup>47</sup> In warrior epics’ plots, low status

companions are portrayed accomplishing superhuman feats of battle, acting in rash and impetuous ways that may usurp the role of their chiefs, consuming immense amounts of opium, and being overcome by drugged stupor at crucial points of battle. They become responsible for acts which bring ritual pollution to their chiefs, for failures to keep promises to the goddess or to women related to their chiefs and allied with the goddess, and ultimately for the defeat and death of their high status chiefs (Hiltebeitel 2001: 63, 103–111). Although Lausen's low status companion Kālu Ḍom has some of these characteristics, including a fondness for alcohol and opium, the plot of *Dharma Maṅgal* does not follow this pattern; Lausen is triumphant at the end, not dead on a battlefield. In the course of the plot's development, however, he does acquire soldiers and become a raja, and the soldiers he recruits do come from an untouchable *jati*, the Ḍoms. These remarks therefore suggest partly similar and partly contrasting contexts by which to understand Lausen's recruitment of Ḍom military retainers and their relation to him.

We also can note a sub-theme portraying the military service of untouchable Ḍom, Candal, and foreign Muslim cohorts; they each formed a special corps in the armies of Lausen, Ichai Ghosh, and Gauresvar respectively.<sup>48</sup> Both the Candals and the foreign Muslims were used for acts that were particularly offensive to *dharma*, the Candals to kidnap boys for ritual sacrifice, and the foreign Muslims to threaten to "touch," pollute, and sexually violate high *jati* Hindu women. Were there similar problems that came with inducting Ḍoms into military service?<sup>49</sup> In thinking about Kālu Ḍom's recruitment, what exactly are we meant to understand by the word "Ḍom"? In this section I will argue authors of *Dharma Maṅgal* linked the Ḍoms' wildness as people familiar with hunting and forests to their martial capacity.

*Dharma Maṅgal* texts never portray Kālu and the Ḍoms as performing the degraded, pollution-removing tasks of handling dead animals or cremating human corpses. Was this an accurate representation of their livelihoods in the Rāṅh during the century from 1650 to 1750 when *Dharma Maṅgal* texts were composed? Despite nineteenth century stereotypes of Ḍoms in Bengal,<sup>50</sup> one of the best of colonial observers noted that most Ḍoms in Bengal were to be distinguished from the few who handled the dead. James Wise

explained their diversity of customs in the following way: "There can be no doubt that the term *Ḍom* is indiscriminately applied to many predatory and outcast tribes, who have nothing in common, but their degraded position . . . ." Even those whom Wise called "genuine *Ḍoms*" displayed a great variety of occupations and customs. There were the "Maghaiya *Ḍoms*," gypsy-like and "professional thieves," and the Mushahar *Ḍoms*, "hunters who wander throughout east Bengal shooting tigers and trapping wild animals" (Wise 1883: 265–66). Both were groups from Bihar, and might have qualified as "predatory," or at least as unsettled.<sup>51</sup> Wise contrasted them with the "town or scavenger *Ḍom*," and with the "carrier and undertaker employed at the burial of the dead," and these in turn he contrasted with *Ḍoms* who lived by manufacturing mats, baskets, and drums, who "repudiate all relationships" with those who handled the dead. Regardless of such differences, Wise noted as common to *Ḍoms* in Bengal the consumption of polluting foods, "swine, domestic fowls, and ducks," and their reputation for being "improvident, and addicted to sensuality and intemperance" (Wise 1883: 266–68).

We can get some observations of the livelihoods of *Ḍoms* in different districts of Bengal and Bihar from the gazetteers edited by W.W. Hunter in the years 1875–1877. In the districts of the Rāḥ, west of the Hugli river and east of the Chota Nagpur plateau, Hunter consistently found large populations of *Ḍoms* whom he described as "basket-makers and cultivators" or as "cultivators, fishermen, and basket-makers" by occupation, and he mentioned nothing about their removing dead bodies (Hunter 1875: vol. 4, 53, 227–28, 332; vol. 3, 56–57, 290–91). In districts of north Bengal the gazetteer found much smaller populations, and in two districts their responsibility for removing dead bodies is mentioned.<sup>52</sup> North of the Chota Nagpur plateau, in districts of Bihar, the picture became complex. For example, in Bhagalpur the gazetteer described a large population of *Ḍoms*, divided into five different categories according to the "depth of impurity" they exhibited, but everywhere in the plains of Bihar some subgroups of *Ḍoms* were "the only persons among Hindus who will remove dead bodies."<sup>53</sup>

If, in contrast to Bihar, *Ḍoms* in the Rāḥ were not marked as degraded by the function of removing dead bodies, were they

available for military recruitment because of other aspects of their livelihood? In particular, did Lausen, as a “royal man of prowess” recruit Kālu and the other Ḍom retainers from a “turbulent margin of martial ‘predators’”, people alien to settled peasant life, as Susan Bayly suggests was the origin of many military recruits in precolonial India? (Bayly 1999: 26, 44).

One Bengali author has described a military role for Ḍoms in precolonial Bengal. R.M. Sarkar writes, apparently conveying what he understood to be common knowledge, but without identifying a source:

The Ḍoms were the martial group of the country, who were engaged many a time to save the country's freedom. They used to employ themselves extensively in the military force of the locality governed by the then *rajas* and zamindars (Sarkar 1986: 46).

There is evidence from nineteenth colonial ethnology that Ḍoms were employed as watchmen and footsoldiers by a few zamindars. In the district of Murshidabad, W.W. Hunter noticed that they were “village watchmen and *nagdis* [hired footsoldiers] of the great landlords”; there they also “perform[ed] the lowest offices as street scavengers and carriers of dead bodies.” In Dinajpur also some Ḍoms were “village watchmen” to complement their livelihoods as “mat-makers and fishermen” (Hunter 1875: vol. 9, 55; and vol. 7, 381). Nothing in colonial ethnology, however, suggests a large-scale military employment of Ḍoms in the Rāṛh.

Nevertheless, in *Dharma Maṅgal* texts Kālu's evident martial capacity draws Lausen's attention, and leads to his employment as the leader of a small cadre of Ḍom soldiers. Less than a day's journey from Gaur, in Ramati, the minister's own town, Lausen and Karpur met a powerful man, Kālu Ḍom. According to Ghanaram, Kālu had the fierce appearance of Yama, the god of death (Mahapatra 1962: 346). In Ram'das Adak's account, Lausen at first believed that Kālu was a divinity in disguise, perhaps Śiva as Arjuna had met him while hunting the boar in Vaikuntha heaven. Other texts tell somewhat different stories to reveal Kālu's military potential, but common motifs are his bodily strength, and his skill as a hunter in using the sling. Just as important to Lausen were the thirteen

Ḍom chiefs and their families, followers of Kālu, who would join him as military cohorts in Lausen's army. Also noteworthy is the fact that Kālu's wife Lakhe (Laksmiye) is a heroic warrior in all versions. Ram'das Adak suggests legends about her feats of battle before marrying Kālu.<sup>54</sup> She will be a model for integrating the ordinarily disparate roles of wife, mother, and warrior.

In striking contrast to their martial capacity, Lausen also observed in the Ḍoms the poverty and pollution associated with their livelihoods. In Ghanaram's version Lausen discovered Kālu herding pigs (Mahapatra 1962: 346). In Mayur Bhatta's version Kālu explained to Lausen that by *jati* his livelihood was to hunt birds and to be a vendor (*besa*, sic., for *becya*) in markets (Deva & Deva 1974: 15). In one of the most complete accounts, Kālu explained that the Ḍoms' livelihood was to herd pigs, and to weave baskets and similar goods (sieves, winnowing fans, and grass mats) and sell them, and that by this means they ate only once at the end of each day (Maiti c2000: 277b). The theme of destitution linked to vending in markets is given particular emphasis by Ram'das Adak.<sup>55</sup> The incompatibility between martial employment and the Ḍoms' traditional livelihood appears in Ghanaram's account when Kālu and his Ḍom followers assembled with their meager baggage and domestic animals to journey to Lausen's kingdom. Lausen laughed, and then insisted that to avoid ridicule the Ḍoms would have to give up raising pigs, chickens and ducks, but he promised that he would give them cows and buffalo instead. More interesting for our purposes is Lausen's requirement that the Ḍoms also throw away all their meager possessions, including their pots of liquor and the goods woven from reeds and bamboo which they had made to sell in markets (Mahapatra 1962: 347; and compare Kayal & Deva 1974: 22–24; and Cattopadhyaya 1938: 152b). I note the idea that what made the Ḍoms degraded was their food, their livelihood, and their poverty, not any ineradicable impurity that was theirs by the nature of their *jati*.

In all versions Lausen proposed that military service would allow the Ḍoms to escape destitution through a gift relationship with him. Certainly he demonstrated his "kingly power and mastery" in dealing with Kālu and the Ḍoms, precisely by ignoring the "pollution

barrier" which ordinarily governed relations between high-*jati* Hindus and untouchables (Bayly 1999: 197). Ram'das Adak describes Lausen's embracing Kālu at their first meeting (after mistaking him for a divinity), and ignoring the latter's advice that he should bathe immediately.<sup>56</sup> In Moyna Lausen built a new quarter of the city to house the Ḍoms, and provided men and women with clothes of honor, ornaments, houses, rent-free agricultural land (*inam, ilam*), and salaries (*mahina*) in return for their service (Mahapatra 1962: 347, 350). He also gave the Ḍoms cattle and buffalo to replace their pigs and fowl, and as one text says, he gave "villages by which to eat rice, and jugs by which to drink water (Kayal & Deva 1974: 25; compare Mahapatra 1962: 350; Datta and datta 1960: 319; and Cattopadhyaya 1938: 153)." Another detail, given only by Ram'das Adak, is that immediately after recruiting Kālu and the thirteen Ḍom families, Lausen gave the Ḍom women clothes to wear (*paridhan bastra*), without which they could not cover their heads and were ashamed to stand before him, and that after being settled the Ḍom women stayed in their houses (apparently keeping *purdah*).<sup>57</sup> We are meant to contrast the ephemeral, self-interested and inherently exploitative market relations of petty vendors mired in destitution to the security of gift relations in military service.

*Dharma Maṅgal* texts disagree about whether Kālu already was engaged in giving service to anyone, but most suppose a prior relation of service to the king Gauresvar. At least one specifies that the Ḍoms have been given a small amount of land for cultivation.<sup>58</sup> All texts agree that Kālu refused to take up service with Lausen without receiving permission from Gauresvar, the overlord. According to Mayur Bhatta, Kālu said, "I will not eat the king by not dwelling in his land" (Kayal & Deva 1974: 19b). As Bayly suggests for this pattern of recruitment, Kālu and the Ḍoms understood their new relation to Lausen as one of "sanctified service" requiring fealty (Bayly 1999: 74). Fealty is expressed in terms of "being true to the salt" that the Ḍoms "eat" from Lausen. Bayly writes of the marginal, turbulent men who entered such service, "A man who shed blood on these terms was the antithesis of the wild or 'impure' predator," and even if he consumed polluting substances or worshiped "fierce, blood-spilling deities", he would not be "disparaged as a person of impure



birth . . .” (Bayly 1999: 74, 194). In all accounts Lausen, by inviting the Ḍoms into his service and installing them in his land, changed their *dharma* from a wilder to a more cultured one.

One *Dharma Maṅgal* text makes it clear that Kālu and the Ḍoms already were worshipers of Dharma before coming to Moyna, and indeed, that Kālu’s wife Lakhe in particular would have a special relation to worship of Dharma. Ram’das Adak states:

They roofed the hero’s house beautifully, and raised a golden banner above it, above Lakhe’s thatch roof they placed a golden flag. “Ḍom woman, in this house you will worship Dharma. For so long your name has been Laksmiye Domuni. From today your name has become Dharma’s Amini (adept)” (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 153).

Another text suggests a continuing connection with the forest. When Lausen resettled the Ḍoms in Moyna, he promised to erect a golden axe before Kālu’s door, and a golden pole with a hook, well curved, by which people would identify his house as belonging to a Ḍom. The latter implement was used to gather flowers and fruit from trees.<sup>59</sup> One detail in the description of the worship of Dharma by Lausen suggests a continuing relation of that worship to services of the lowest *jati* in clearing forests. With a company of devotees, Lausen journeyed to Hakanda, near the mountain behind which the Sun sets in the west. He found the blood red Hakanda river with forests on both banks. He employed a Hari, or two Hari brothers (in colonial ethnology, “sweepers”) to clear the forest. The Hari built a riverbank landing at which to bathe, cut a broad clearing within the forest, and made a raised platform for a temporary shrine (*jagati*, *jagadhi*) where Dharma would be invoked, a fire pit for sacrifices, a seat facing the shrine, and a path between the clearing and the riverbank landing (Mahapatra 1962: 575–7; compare Maiti c2001: 285b, 287a). Given their connection to worship of Dharma, it is not difficult to imagine a gradual transition of Ḍoms (together with other very low ranked *jatis*) in the Rāṛh from people who lived in and upon the forests to people who helped clear the forest, and then to laborers, cultivators and basket makers. Nevertheless, even after their settlement in Moyna, the original “wildness” and the natural appetites of Ḍoms cannot be completely altered, and in the



final section of the poem all authors describe the failure of Doms men to worship the goddess, and to fulfill their obligations to Lausen, failures caused by their inveterate fondness for alcohol and drunkenness (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 209–10; Mahapatra 1962: 599–602; Maiti c2001: 298–300).

### Attracting Settlers, Winning Wives

We now may turn to the narratives that describe how Lausen peopled his land, won wives, and changed his status from celibate warrior to married householder. The inherent contradiction between celibacy and the life of a married householder may make this transition problematic.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Lausen acquired two of his wives from the goddess, indirectly in the case of his first wife, and directly in the case of his fourth wife. The narrative of these events negotiates a shifting balance in Lausen's relation to the goddess, but ultimately he must win her cooperation while remaining a devotee of Dharma.

Although some *Dharma Maṅgal* give comparatively unproblematic accounts of how Lausen settled Moyna, most agree with Ghanaram's statement that "subjects came from many lands" because they heard about his mercy (*asan*, literally, relief) (Mahapatra 1962: 350). Only Ram'das Adak and Narasimha Basu describe the rent and tax relief Lausen offered. According to both authors he charged only one *ana* per *bigha*, whereas the minister in Gaur charged one rupee, sixteen times as much. According to Narasimha Basu, Lausen collected no head tax, arranged for twelve monthly installments of the land tax, and in share-cropping took two shares for a tenant's three. Therefore, Ram'das Adak writes, the fifty-two markets of Gaur were abandoned, as people came to Moyna by the hundreds. The king's resulting losses led him to blame the minister, and the minister in turn plotted to get rid of Lausen by sending him on a difficult military expedition.<sup>61</sup>

Established as a raja with the Doms as the core of his army, and having acquired and settled Moyna as his *jagir*, Lausen had to provide military assistance to his overlord upon request, but this obligation was made more dangerous by the minister's hostility and

by his manipulation of Gauresvar. All three versions of *Dharma Maṅgal* begin this story with an account of the greed and oppression of the minister, who had driven away the subjects of Gaur by his excessive taxation.<sup>62</sup> Threatened with censure, the minister resigned, and then to divert blame from himself and to secure reappointment to his office, he secretly invited an attack on Gaur by Karpur'dhal, the raja of Kanur (Kamrup). By arranging for Gauresvar to be terrified by the threat of war, the minister secured freedom from censure and permission to resume his duties. He then summoned Lausen to attack Kanur, to capture Karpur'dhal, and to bring him to Gaur together with all the taxes he owed. Secretly, the minister hoped that Lausen would fail, and perhaps die in the attempt.<sup>63</sup> A compensatory strategy of lies thus compounds the minister's initial moral failing of greed. Hidden purposes and manipulative tactics will characterize the minister's subsequent dealings both with Gauresvar and with Lausen.

Lausen discovered that both Kamakhya's temple and Karpur'dhal's fort were impregnable to attack by invading armies, because they were located on the farther bank of the Brahmaputra river, and the goddess Kamakhya caused the river to flood whenever an enemy army approached. A goddess identified with a locality, established in a royal temple and worshiped by the raja of that locality, protects her locality, her raja, and her worshipers from attack. In addition to the underlying motive of the minister's greed, we therefore need to notice the locality, Kanur or Kamrup, and the opposition to Lausen from Kamrup's own goddess Kamakhya, whom we have met in one version of Suriksa's riddle. Problems of sexuality and a potential motive of lust may be suggested by this locality and this goddess, to complement the overt motives of greed with which the episode begins.

To subdue Kamakhya and to remove her from Kamrup, Lausen had to acquire two objects with magical powers. These objects are the knife (*katari*) belonging to Ocean (*samudra*), and the holy rosary necklace made of forearms (*brahma-kar-japya-mala*). The two magical objects in turn make Lausen's triumph depend upon the aid of a distant female *kutumba* relative, Gauresvar's mother Ballabha, who had come to have possession of them (Mahapatra 1962: 366–8;

Cattopadhyaya 1938: 136–7). They also reveal a secret story about this queen, and about Gauresvar's true parentage. This story, which Hanuman knows, is embarrassing to Ballabha, but it also suggests that her son Gauresvar may have inherited a karmic weakness to temptations of lust (a theme fully developed in the next episode of *Dharma Maṅgal*). The gist of the story is that Gauresvar was in fact the bastard son of Ocean, who once took the form of Ballabha's husband, and had sex with her. When she sensed that she had had intercourse with a stranger, and Ocean knew that she knew, he gave Ballabha the two magical objects to keep her from cursing him. They had the following powers: when the knife touches water, even the flood waters of the dissolution of the age, the water will turn to land; and when shown the garland, the goddess will flee in shame (Mahapatra 1962: 370–75; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 136–40).

With these objects in Lausen's hands, the conquest of Kanur was accomplished quickly, but it was entirely the achievement of Kālu. Kālu disguised himself as an ascetic (*yati*), forded the shrunken Brahmaputra, showed the garland to Kamakhya, forcing her to abandon her temple, and then he defeated the disheartened army of the king Karpur'dhal in single combat. Ghanaram gives a pragmatic reason for Kālu's disguise as an ascetic: because ascetics do not have to heed the commands of a king, so disguised he could go wherever he wished in the city (Mahapatra 1962: 379). Surely, however, we also should understand that only an ascetic can conquer this aspect of goddess, who is so closely identified with female sexuality. Kālu carefully deflected her anger by asking her to withdraw only for a day, and by promising to worship her after proving victorious in battle; but after seeing the power of the garland to drive her out of the temple against her will, he became crazy (*matta*), and danced with joy (Mahapatra 1962: 379, 382). Ghanaram's plot particularly makes this offense to Kamakhya Kālu's responsibility. Then, having defeated the army and captured the king, Kālu brought Karpur'dhal bound in fetters to Lausen's camp across the river. Ram'das Adak's account particularly makes Kālu's offense one of mistreating Karpur'dhal, whom he verbally abused, and "tied up like a pig." Moreover, Kālu strenuously objected to Karpur'dhal's proposal to give Lausen his daughter in marriage in return for being

released.<sup>64</sup> In either case, by enacting them himself Kālu saved Lausen from morally questionable actions related to conflict with the goddess and the conquest of Kanur.

We can analyze the subsequent “politics of marriage” in creating a relation between former opponents. Karpur’dhal proposed to give Lausen his daughter in marriage, seeking the protection of a marriage relation with his conqueror, and in Ghanaram’s version, after accepting the marriage offer, Lausen opposed Kālu’s proposal to punish Karpur’dhal by cutting off his ears and nose. Of course, when the marriage had been agreed to, Karpur’dhal also showed his love (*adar*) to Lausen through many gifts of wealth (Mahapatra 1962: 397). Because death impurities resulting from Kālu’s slaughter of Kanur’s soldiers blocked the auspicious celebrations of a wedding for a full year, Lausen asked for Dharma’s intervention, and thus became the intercessor through whom all the dead were revived. Karpur’dhal in turn invited the goddess back to his city by celebrating a “great *pūjā*”—that is, one with animal sacrifices (Mahapatra 1962: 398). Only Ghanaram describes a change in a normal Bengali wedding ceremony itself. The bride Kalinga insisted that no “women’s rites” (*stri acar*) were to be included in the celebration. These rites are designed to provide magic charms to enhance the bride’s sexual appeal, and thereby to give her some control over her husband. “What good,” Kalinga asked, “are charms (*ausudha*) with a husband who is a devotee of Dharma and an ascetic like Lausen, one who successfully has proved to be true even when tempted by the goddess?”<sup>65</sup> In fact, despite the danger to him, Kalinga will succeed in persuading Lausen to make love to her, on the very night of his summons to attack Ichai Ghosh.

Finally, although Lausen journeyed back to Gaur with the defeated king, and presented him and the withheld taxes to Gauresvar, he also intervened to prevent punishment in a harsh prison (*ghor bandikhana*) for his father-in-law. Lausen argued:

Karpur’dhal is an honest, righteous raja; his character is not crooked. That which you have heard about him was the result of a wicked plot, so the war that he fought was lawful for a king (*raj’byabahar*). Still, the victory was won by your own virtue and power. At present he is your *baibahik* (the father of your son’s wife) (Mahapatra 1962: 404).

Lausen interceded on behalf of Karpur'dhal with Gauresvar, by calling attention to their new marriage relationship as fathers of the groom and of the bride respectively (of course, Gauresvar was only fictively Lausen's father). Mutual support strengthened both Lausen and Karpur'dhal in the marriage alliance, but Lausen also proved his loyalty by delivering Karpur'dhal's taxes to Gauresvar; his service to the king would not be deflected by greed.

Kālu and his Doms and Kalinga and her father are related by a common subaltern alliance with Lausen and by Kālu's conquest of Kanur. Ram'das Adak's narrative suggests a somewhat antagonistic relation between the two parties: Kālu first opposed Karpur'dhal's offer of a marriage alliance, suspecting some planned treachery on the part of the raja against Lausen; and then he insisted on a proper wedding ceremony, because anything less would be a stain on Lausen's lineage (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 144–5). We will have to explore more deeply the relations between Kālu and Kalinga when we consider the final episode of the poem.<sup>66</sup>

### The Warrior Bride

Lausen's final bride Kanara is a very different kind of woman, and she enacts very different gender roles for women. Rather than complementing Lausen as a perfectly submissive wife, Kanara seems to be his feminine double. She is not given away by her father; rather, in a "bride's choice" (*svayambar*) she independently "chooses" Lausen by means of a trial of the martial powers of potential grooms. Kanara is a devotee of the goddess. Before the wedding she, her maidservant Dhumasi, and the goddess all together defeat the whole army of Gauresvar and the minister, and in Ram'das Adak's version Kanara later fights Lausen himself to a draw (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 169b–170a). In many ways she conforms to the character of a heroic woman, a *virangana*, but she does not have to defend her righteousness by suicide.

Following their victory over the minister the goddess gives Kanara to Lausen in marriage. This episode therefore also develops a theme of the goddess's cooperation with Lausen, and with Lord Dharma's purposes for him. Finally, unlike many north Indian oral traditions about warrior brides, *Dharma Maṅgal* texts do not explicitly

state that Kanara must remain a virgin after marriage,<sup>67</sup> but in one place Ghanaram does suggest this.<sup>68</sup> Unlike Kalinga, she never will become a mother. Comparing the two wives, we see a splitting of female roles, perhaps in part based on the assumption that motherhood and competence in battle are or ought to be mutually exclusive. We will see, however, that Kālu's wife successfully combines both roles.

Both Ghanaram and Ram'das Adak begin this story with a lapse by Lausen, who was too engrossed in marital pleasures to attend to his earthly purpose, establishing the *baramati*, the twelve-day form of Dharma worship "virtuous in the time of Kālī" (Mahapatra 1962: 410; compare Cattopadhyaya 1938: 145b). All versions of *Dharma Maṅgal* emphasize the topic of lust by describing a similar but more serious moral lapse on the part of the aged king Gauresvar, who witnessed the performance of a dancing girl, and asked the minister to arrange for him to meet her privately. The minister told the king that he should quit this raving (*pralap*), but that nothing would prevent him from marrying a suitable young girl (Mahapatra 1962: 414). The minister proposed a marriage to Kanara, the young daughter of raja Haripal of Simulya. Note that this suggestion is meant to be considered a kind of madness, ridiculous and blameworthy because of Gauresvar's advanced age.<sup>69</sup> Lust itself seems to be the opening for this story, as greed was for the previous one, but in an episode with many comic motifs, Kanara, a beautiful girl, will find a proper husband in Lausen, a handsome and powerful young warrior and raja.

Gauresvar selected his court panegyrist and genealogist, a Brahman, to send to Simulya with a marriage proposal, and, according to Ghanaram, the king explained to him that lying in order to arrange a marriage should not be considered a fault.<sup>70</sup> Again a stratagem involving lies compounds the initial moral failing. The go-between obtained the consent of the bride's father, raja Haripal,<sup>71</sup> but when the father in turn approached Kanara with this proposal, she refused, and told her father that she would handle all problems arising from her refusal. Concerned about the true age of Gauresvar, she had her maidservant provide a bath and food to a company of corvée laborers accompanying the go-between. Of course these unfortunates were unaccustomed to kindness. Ghanaram adds

that they had begun to suspect that they were to be offered as human sacrifices when Kanara appeared to them dressed in the guise of Goddess Kālī, and made them swear to tell her the truth. She demanded to know the king's age and health. They told her he was no less than 120, and was in no way a suitable groom.<sup>72</sup> Armed with the truth, she then confronted the go-between with the same oath and question, and the go-between lied. Therefore, Kanara ordered her maidservant to shave his head, to soak him in horse piss, to mark one cheek with lime and one with lampblack, to garland him with China roses (*ora mala*), and to send him back to Gaur (Mahapatra 1962: 420–1; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 161).

In Ghanaram's version, the language which describes how Kanara dishonored the go-between is precisely parallel to Mukunda's language describing how Kalketu dismissed Bharu Datta for collecting oppressive taxes in his tax-free market, and for then fomenting war between Kalketu's kingdom and that of the high *jati* ruler of the neighboring kingdom.<sup>73</sup> Most important to this case of intertextuality is our sense that exactly like Bharu Datta, the go-between has been justly disgraced. Kanara already may have been in rebellion against Gauresvar, but if so, she is the first and only righteous rebel in *Dharma Maṅgal*. She belongs to a category of "independent, politically savvy" fictional heroines in middle Bengali literature, heroines who dramatically transgress expected gender roles in order to recreate proper order.<sup>74</sup>

In response, Gauresvar mustered his whole army for a groom's journey to Simulya. Their arrival before Simulya provides a second comic contrast between the cowardly father and his omniscient girl. According to Ghanaram, Kanara complained to her father:

You, father, are supreme, I have no one else. If you had come to an understanding and sold me, then I would have been sold right there! But should there be any reason for shame or fear in speaking the truth? By what kind of intelligence will you give away your daughter to an old man? Why do you want to adulterate unalloyed gold?<sup>75</sup>

When her father refused to withdraw his agreement to the marriage,<sup>76</sup> Kanara again told him she would handle everything, and promised to destroy the king's entire 900,000-man army. Both Ghanaram and



Ram'das Adak agree that Haripal fled for his life, and hid himself in a nearby fort (Mahapatra 1962: 430; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 163).

In these circumstances Kanara prayed to the goddess, and the goddess introduced a gigantic iron rhinoceros made by Visvakarma. This device serves both as the locus for a series of comic episodes, and as the suitors' test for Kanara's bride's choice. The goddess had Kanara swear that only the man who could cut completely through it with one blow of his sword would become her husband. Both Gauresvar and the minister made fools of themselves in the attempt. The swords of both men shattered against its body, and failed even to scratch its surface. Twelve servants had to lift his sword for the weak king, who fainted from the effort of his blow, and only regained consciousness half an hour later. The minister, on the other hand, was so short that he had to stand on a platform to reach the rhinoceros, and a piece of his own shattered sword hit his nose, which caused profuse bleeding, which in turn incapacitated the minister for hours (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 164–5; Mahapatra 1962: 438–9). Unwittingly furthering the development of this comedy, the minister then suggested that Lausen be called to perform the ordeal in the king's place. Of course, Lausen easily cut the rhinoceros in two with the goddess's own sword, and Kanara's maidservant then garlanded him as Kanara's groom.

Lausen cannot be allowed to claim the bride at this point, despite fulfilling the clearly stated terms of the suitors' test.<sup>77</sup> As the minister explained, while shaming Lausen for accepting the garland, the king already had performed the first ritual in a wedding ceremony before setting out; the wedding therefore was already half-accomplished.<sup>78</sup> Lausen should not think of marrying his mother's sister (*masi*; that is, a woman who would be like a mother to him).<sup>79</sup> Lausen agreed; he would not usurp his overlord's claim to the bride. The minister sent him and Kālu to find and fetch the girl's father. The plot thus accomplishes several important purposes. Lausen had proved that lust would not deflect his service of the king. All males on the scene had become aligned against Kanara, but Lausen and Kālu were removed from the battle that followed between Kanara and the minister and Gauresvar; thus they did not offend against the goddess by joining in the battle against her devotee, as



the minister and Gauresvar did. Kanara, her heroic maidservant Dhumasi, and demon troops of the goddess easily defeated the assembled 900,000-man army of Gauresvar; and the king and minister were left alive, but locked up inside a husking shed (Mahapatra 1962: 450–8; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 167–9).

Meantime Lausen and Kālu saw signs of a fierce battle, and came to the battlefield. According to Ghanaram, Kālu impulsively ran to attack the maidservant Dhumasi, and by the advice of the goddess this woman led him to a supply of opium and a feast of good food, and Kālu ate prodigious amounts of both and fell asleep.<sup>80</sup> We may note that this first case of Kālu's succumbing to drugged oblivion prevented his attacking and offending women linked to the goddess, an inverse of the plot usual in many north Indian heroes' epics, where the drugged state of a low status companion to the hero induces an offense to the goddess (Hiltebeitel 2001:103–05).

All versions agree that Lausen had to fight, or almost fight, against Kanara before the wedding could be accomplished. He refused to marry Kanara when she introduced herself on the battlefield because he could not marry her without infringing on the prerogative of Gauresvar, his overlord; moreover, the slain soldiers of Gauresvar's army required revenge. Kanara swore that she would either die at his hands, and thus obtain the "giver of immortality," or kill him, become a *satī* and so unite with him forever after death. According to Ghanaram, Lausen in turn swore that if he won, he would carry Kanara to Gauresvar; but if he lost he would marry her (Mahapatra 1962: 467–8). The terms of these oaths recall the oaths in the contest between Lausen and Suriksa; indeed, there are reasons both to compare and to contrast these two "independent" women. The outcome of the contest, however, must be the opposite. Dharma must not intervene against the goddess and her plans for a wedding, and Lausen either must withdraw from the fight without being victorious over Kanara, or lose to her, in order for the wedding to take place.<sup>81</sup> In this way he can marry Kanara under some duress, and do so without being disloyal to Gauresvar. (Either before or after the wedding, Lausen also asked for the dead soldiers of Gauresvar to be revived.)<sup>82</sup>

Even withdrawal without victory must have been thought derogatory to Lausen's prestige. Manik'ram Ganguli therefore

reshaped the story so that Lausen could win the battle with Kanara and still marry her, by altering the terms of his oath. He has Lausen swear, “If I win, you will become my three-quarters slave.” Taking advantage of a range of meanings for the words “slave” (*dasi*) and “master” (*pati*), Kanara deliberately loses to Lausen, thinking to herself, “If I become your slave you will fulfill my oath”; that is, Lausen would be her master/husband (*pati*) (Datta & Datta 1960: 404).

Given the misogynist satires in the earlier episode with Suriksa, it is remarkable that Kanara was not punished in any way for being “independent” of her father. Moreover, Kanara was a warrior herself, and had some features of a rebel. Her role as a rebel against Gauresvar was resolved, at least temporarily, by her marriage to Lausen, and the role of the goddess seems partly to change also, from supporting rebels to supporting as well Lausen’s youngest wife. From the minister’s war against Kanara on, the goddess will cease to assist the minister, despite his occasional worship of her. This important plot device for resolving the role of the goddess receives further development in later sections of the poem.

### PART III: OFFERING SACRIFICES

#### Lausen’s Battlefield Sacrifice of Ichai/Ravana

With the completion of his multiple marriages, Lausen had become a raja. The next two episodes develop themes related to sacrifice. They involve the principal enemies of Lausen’s patrilineage, Ichai Ghosh and Mahamad the minister. Ichai must be sacrificed on the battlefield. The minister, on the contrary, puts Lausen in a position where he must sacrifice himself to Lord Dharma in a “truth ordeal.” The two episodes complete Lausen’s duties as a warrior and raja. In the second, he also assumes some responsibilities of the minister, and takes the king’s own place as a sacrificer and worshiper of Dharma. Taken together, they allow us to contrast the roles of raja and minister, and the two kinds of sacrifice, battlefield sacrifices and self-sacrifice in truth ordeals.

As *Dharma Maṅgal* describe how Lausen must slay the low-*jati* Goyala enemy of his patrilineage, Ichai Ghosh, crucial incidents of

the plot reinforce analogies between Lausen and Rama, his wives and Sita, and Ichai and Ravana; indeed the whole episode evokes mnemonic commentary alluding to events in Rama's conquest of Lanka. Especially in Ghanaram's text Dharma himself is identified with Viṣṇu. This episode also is crucial for both explaining and resolving the conflict between Dharma and the goddess, the respective protectors of Lausen and Ichai. Gendered conflict between Dharma, the divine guarantor of unified political authority on the one hand, and the goddess, the divine sponsor of rebellion on the other, is replaced by a complementary division of political responsibility. Thus the episode also resolves a pattern of alternating support and enmity in the treatment of Lausen by the goddess. Finally, behind the scenes, this episode re-introduces the minister Mahamad as manipulating Gauresvar and as the most dangerous of Lausen's opponents.

Still angered by his humiliation at the hands of Kanara and her maidservant, the minister conspired to have the king send Lausen to collect taxes from Ichai Ghosh, the old enemy of Lausen's father, who had seized his land of Dhekur. Again, the minister hoped that Lausen would die in the attempt. As the king sealed the letter summoning Lausen, Ghanaram gives us a proverbial analysis of Mahamad's threat to proper order, which confirms the analogy between his seductive and manipulative methods and those of a woman: "a man in the control of the wife, a king in the control of the minister (Mahapatra 1962: 474)." Ram'das Adak repeats on several different occasions a similarly comparative couplet: *patrabhedi raja ar naribhedi nar/patrabhedi bhupati bhulila gauresvar* (A king is divided [from his subjects] by a minister, and a man is divided [from his family] by a woman. Divided by his minister, the king Gauresvar did wrong (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 241a).)

Lausen's mother, or his mother and his wives, or Kanara in particular opposed this summons. Narasimha Basu emphasizes Kanara's continuing link with the goddess, her awareness of the minister's plotting to send Lausen against Ichai with the purpose of killing him, her proposal that Lausen become independent of Gauresvar, and her assertion that in her own capacity as a warrior aided by the goddess she herself could defend the land of Moyna

against Gauresvar. Against these arguments, Lausen responded that he was not independent but a servant of the king, and that he desired to fulfill the orders of his king, whose salt he had eaten.<sup>83</sup>

Ghanaram, on the other hand, emphasizes Lausen's mother's attempt to keep him at home by arranging for sexual relations with Kalinga. Kalinga's beauty tempted Lausen, as his mother intended; furthermore, because they were without sons, the couple had a duty to procreate. Putting shame aside, Kalinga confided that she had just finished her period of menstrual impurity. All of these reasons for having sexual relations overbalanced Lausen's fear that "his journey would be broken by a wife's touch," and his argument that she should not touch him because he [already] had undertaken to make the journey to Dhekur (*dhekur karechi yatra na kara paras*). That night the couple made love and Kalinga conceived, but the next morning she agreed with Lausen that "eating the king's salt as his servant" obligated him to obey the king and attack Ichai. Her earlier opposition had been "a woman's foolishness" (Mahapatra 1962: 478–84).

Because of Ichai's boons from the goddess, and because of her continuing support, Ichai could not be killed in battle by Lausen alone; his death required a comically complex stratagem, and cooperation of most of the divine males who have significant roles in *Dharma Maṅgal*. Lausen and Kālu Ḍom discovered that Ichai's fortress was protected by the goddess Syamarupa (Kālī) and by the Ajay River, which flooded at their approach just as the Brahmaputra river had done in Kamrup. Unable to cross, the Doms set up a camp on the riverbank and began to fish and hunt, an offense to the Ajay river (herself a female divinity) and to the goddess Syamarupa. Commanded by the goddess, Ichai's low-*jati* military servant, Lohata Bajar, a Candal, crossed the river, challenged Kālu, and was killed. Lausen, in a moment of foolishness, sent Lohata's severed head to Gaur, as a sign and prediction of his future success in the war (Mahapatra 1962: 488–93; Cattopadhyaya 1938:175–7).

This event introduces a motif of severed heads, provides two mnemonic links to Rama's conquest of Ravana, and sets the stage for a threatened death that requires Dharma's intervention. The minister contrived to fashion from Lohata's head an illusion-producing image of Lausen's head, a *maya-munda*. He sent this refashioned head

to Moyna to induce Lausen's wives to commit suicide by immolation. Of course this is a copy of Ravana's strategy with Sita, after Rama's army had arrived in Lanka (*Ramayana*, *Yuddhakanda*, 31). At the last minute Dharma himself prevented their immolation. He told them that the head was not Lausen's, and that Lausen was alive, and provided evidence for this assertion by giving Lausen's ring to Kalinga, his first wife, just as Hanuman once had given Rama's ring to Sita, to prove to her that Rama had sent him and would rescue her (*Ramayana*, *Sundarakanda*, 34). Dharma then threw the false head into the funeral pyre. The wax by which it had been made to look like Lausen melted, and the Candali's head was revealed. Most *Dharma Maṅgal* texts suggest nothing but praise for the queens' decision to become *satīs*. In Ram'das Adak's account, however, despite the evidence of their direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) that the head was not Lausen's, his queens remained unreasonably determined to immolate themselves, and resumed dancing madly around the pyre, and then jumped into the firepit. Dharma had to put out the fire and lift them out. He then revealed himself to them as Viṣṇu, Krishna, and Balarama, and received worship from them (Mahapatra 1962: 500–05; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 178–81). Meantime Kālu and Lausen contrived a new plan of attack, and the Doms succeeded in crossing the river on rafts. Their plan was that Lausen would fly across on his magical horse, but the Ajay river sensed Lausen's arrival, swamped him and his horse in a mighty flood, and carried both of them downstream. Her creatures killed and ate the horse, and she took Lausen to a watery prison in hell. These actions set the stage for the second divine intervention, this time by Hanuman, who descended to hell, refashioned (bit by bit) and revived the horse after the river's creatures had been forced to regurgitate what they had swallowed, and then carried Lausen and the horse up to the riverbank. Lausen and the horse then completed their crossing to Ichai's side of the river (Mahapatra 1962: 505–13; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 182–4). Although the details are very different, this story may remind us of the two times Hanuman uprooted Ausadhiparvata, the Medicinal Mountain, to revive Rama and Lakmana (*Ramayana*, *Yuddhakanda*, 74, 102).

Other echoes of the *Ramayana* can be heard after Lausen and Ichai begin the battle. The latter had been armed by the goddess with

three divine arrows, one for Kālu, one for Lausen's horse, and one for Lausen himself (Mahapatra 1962: 516; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 184). First Kālu engaged Ichai, and was defeated and killed by the weapon meant for him, just as Ravana first seemed to kill Lakshmana; but like Lakshmana, Kālu immediately was restored to life by Dharma.<sup>84</sup> Lausen then entered the battle. As his terms for peace, Lausen demanded only that Ichai pay the taxes he owed to Gauresvar, but Ichai contemptuously refused (Mahapatra 1962: 528; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 187a). After a very long battle, Lausen cut off Ichai's head, and then saw that it continued to call upon the name of the goddess, and by the boon of the goddess his head leapt up and rejoined Ichai's trunk (Mahapatra 1962: 530–1; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 187b). Although the two retired from battle for that day, on the next day Lausen repeatedly cut off Ichai's head, only to see it be rejoined to his body. Of course, Rama also had watched Ravana's severed heads reappear on his neck as he cut them off with his arrows.<sup>85</sup>

Given this intervention by the goddess, Dharma and the gods planned a comically complex series of stratagems to use against her. They first had Hanuman catch Ichai's severed head and throw it into the netherworld, where it was swallowed by *nagas*. Even from there the goddess rescued her devotee (Mahapatra 1962: 535–7; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 189). Worse, she promised to kill Lausen herself and to drink his blood. So that this vow might be fulfilled and Lausen still be saved, the gods in turn created a deceptive image of Lausen, whose head the goddess cut off and whose blood she drank as a sacrificial offering from Ichai (Mahapatra 1962: 540–41). By the prior plan of the gods, Narada arrived to witness this deed, and shamed the goddess for acting like a witch, and then led her on a chase back to Śiva's abode in heaven. Confronting Śiva she felt shame, but he "bound her by the strong ropes of love." The gods took the opportunity of this amatory, or at least domestic interlude, to bring the real Lausen out of hiding, so that he could cut off Ichai's head a final time. Hanuman caught it and carried it to heaven, and thus Ichai obtained *nirvana*.<sup>86</sup> Again we can hear an echo of the *Ramayana*. That the death of evil opponents at the hands of Rama should bring them liberation is a theme of the *Ramayana*, and their

release is a function of Rama's own divinity as an *avatār* of Viṣṇu, and therefore of his divine kingship.<sup>87</sup>

So insistent is the contextual presence of the *Ramayana* that we may ask, is Lausen's relation to Rama one of partial identity? Only Ghanaram, whose poem is filled with Rama devotionism, raises this question. When Lausen came to Gaur with news of his victory, Gauresvar said: "You are the son of a god, foremost of heroes, you are the descendant of a lineage of kings. You are a partial *avatār*, come to the circle of the earth." Some added, "This is the Supreme Spirit (*param puruṣa*) who has taken the form of a human by *maya*" (Mahapatra 1962: 548). All other versions omit this suggestion of Lausen's divinity.<sup>88</sup> After he had slain Ichai, Lausen had to be saved from the wrath of the goddess. In Ghanaram's version her divine companion Padmabati argued: "The Gop has been set free; he will not be reborn. So why destroy Sen? Why should he not become a receptacle for your mercy? It just isn't right to be so cruel to one who received from you both your own weapon and his bride Kanara" (Mahapatra 1962: 545). We are told that the goddess was calmed by these arguments, and especially by remembering her prior promises to "stay near" to and to support Kanara. Lausen asked for her forgiveness, and if that were not possible, he asked her to take back the weapon which she had given him and to sacrifice him with it. The goddess clapped her hands to her ears. "Kanara," she said, "is my beloved daughter and you are her lord. My heart will forgive you for all that Fate caused to happen" (Mahapatra 1962: 546). Other versions agree that the marriage to Kanara saved Lausen from her wrath (Cattopadhyaya 1938:193; Maiti c2001: 270a; Datta & Datta 1960: 465).

The plot thus develops a structural shift in the position of the goddess relative to her human worshipers. Earlier, she had been the recipient of royal worship from a rebel matriarch, Suriksa, from two rebellious rajas, Karpur'dhal of Kamrup, and Ichai Ghosh, and from an "independent" princess, Kanara. To the extent that she once had been a rebel, Kanara is the only rebel from whose worship the goddess never is separated by the plot of the poem. In the next episode the goddess in turn will support Kanara in her role as the final, and most successful warrior in Moyna during Lausen's absence.



In place of an earlier structural opposition between Dharma and Lausen on one hand, and the goddess and various rebels on the other, *Dharma Maṅgal* texts in this episode propose a new, complementary relation, one between Dharma and Lausen on the one hand, and the goddess and Kanara on the other.

### Lausen's Self-Sacrifice and his Subalterns' New Roles

The last major episode of the poem requires that Lausen assume a new role. He was summoned to Gaur to correct a disastrous flood brought upon the land by the minister's improper, self-interested, and incomplete worship of Dharma on behalf of the king. Describing the journey, Ghanaram writes that Lausen went to Gaur as an ascetic (*yati*), and that he took Karpur with him, because this was "not a battle or quarrel but a danger and an inauspiciousness (Mahapatra 1962: 559)." Lausen successfully interceded with Dharma on the king's behalf. As suggested by the minister, and commanded by his overlord, Lausen then journeyed to Hakanda in order to sacrifice himself to make the Sun rise in the west, and thus free the king and the land from "sin." According to Ram'das Adak, for this undertaking Lausen had to "unbind his hair, give up his royal silk shawl (*patta*) and assume the garb of a *sannyasi*" (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 201). Thus, in this episode Lausen's roles of warrior and raja are replaced by the role of a renunciate adept who can intercede with Dharma for Gauresvar and worship on the king's behalf. By sacrificing himself on behalf of the king and for his sins, Lausen both took on some of the king's own authority without claiming the throne, and acquired coercive power over Dharma himself without departing from the supplicant position of being Dharma's devotee.

In Lausen's absence at Hakanda, and without the king's knowledge, the minister and the entire army of Gauresvar then attacked Moyna. Lausen's absence from Moyna, because of his shift in roles from warrior and raja to advisor and "ascetic" or "renouncer", in turn opened the way for Kālu, his wife Lakhe, and Kālu's sons, and for Lausen's wives Kalinga and Kanara also to shift their roles in order to defend the city. Subaltern martial agency is

represented by *Dharma Maṅgal* texts as including some capacity to shift between normal and extraordinary roles.<sup>89</sup>

At Hakanda Lausen ultimately cut off his own limbs and head in an act of self-sacrifice. One must note that his example provides sanction for the ritual sacrifices and the dangerous and painful ordeals commonly performed in the *Dharma Gājan*, as well as for the specifically “Lauseni” elements of ritual which sometimes are performed (Chattopadhyay 1942: 121–3). Lausen’s contrasting roles of warrior and renouncer can be used further to classify the extraordinary roles of Lausen’s subalterns in the defense of Moyna. Kālu’s wife Lakhe and Kālu’s two sons, and Lausen’s wife Kanara accomplished the ordinary sacrifices of opponents in battle. Kālu himself, and Lausen’s first wife Kalinga, on the other hand, sacrificed themselves to preserve their own truth and honor, thereby making Lausen’s success at Hakanda possible. This episode will help us clarify the components of Lausen’s new role in offering himself as a sacrifice, and its relation to the less perfect enactments of ordeals of self-sacrifice by his subalterns.

Lausen’s extraordinary worship at Hakanda of course became the model for making Dharma’s worship “widespread,” or for establishment of the “complete *baramati*,” and thus it fulfilled Dharma’s purpose for Lausen’s mortal life. If ultimately Dharma was the destinator and the king the beneficiary of Lausen’s self-sacrifice, it also was made necessary by several decisions of the minister Mahamad after the defeat of Ichai. To the king Mahamad explained that Lausen’s prowess both threatened the throne of Gaur, and was the result of Lausen’s worship of Dharma. As previous episodes have been marked by the motives of greed and lust, this last one is marked by the threat of usurpation. The minister then argued that the king himself should worship Dharma to prevent Lausen’s becoming king of Gaur. Lausen need not be consulted; the minister knew what was required for worship. According to Ram’das Adak the minister also had a secret and evil intent for worshiping: to “cause Rañjābatī to eat her son’s head”; that is, to destroy him utterly (Cattopadhyay 1938: 194b). Moreover, he proceeded with minimal expense, by building a “house” for Dharma’s worship with corvée labor, rather than by paying for its construction (Mahapatra

1962: 550–52). His worship, not being “single-minded,” resulted in rain, hailstorms and disastrous flooding for Gaur, and, by a completely inauspicious action, he therefore abandoned it before it was completed. Lausen had to be summoned to stop the incessant storms and to save the kingdom.

Lausen made the rains end in Gaur “with a thought” and dispersed the floods by single-minded meditation on Dharma, but then the minister conceived another and more difficult task for him. The “endless sins” of the king’s broken vow to complete the worship of Dharma, he argued, could only be reversed when the Sun and Moon were united at night, and the Sun then reversed its normal course, to cause sunrise in the west (according to Ghanaram, this idea is the secret intention of Dharma itself) Mahapatra 1962: 561). Did he know this would require Lausen’s self-sacrifice? Moreover, he insisted on terms particularly dishonoring to Lausen in order to guarantee his performance of the worship at Hakanda: imprisonment of Lausen’s parents until Lausen’s return (Mahapatra 1962: 562; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 197b–198a).

Here Ghanaram gives us his most frequently repeated lesson in subaltern dharma. Back in Moyna, Kālu instead proposed to Karṇasen, Lausen’s father, that if he would give the command, Kālu would “bring the royal umbrella of Gaur here, or else let you the *raja* become the overlord (*maharaja*) there.” Karṇasen rejected this as “a most improper act; violating the king’s salt is the way to hell.” Arguing for continued loyalty, he cited the examples of Karṇa, Drona, and Bhishma who all had died while remaining “true to the salt” of Duryodhana (Mahapatra 1962: 563). Disobedience is ruled out, even to a ruler who is transparently unrighteous.

During each one of Lausen’s prior absences from Moyna, his younger brother Karpur had been left with the responsibility for ruling in Lausen’s place, and Kālu had accompanied Lausen as his chief military assistant. This time Lausen told Karpur to stay in Gaur to take care of their imprisoned parents. Karpur’s virtue in caring for them would be required for the Sun to rise in the west (Mahapatra 1962: 565). As a plot device, the joint absence of Lausen and Karpur from Moyna opens a new and perhaps insoluble problem: who would have authority there? Lausen chose Kālu despite his *jati*. Lausen carefully reminded Kālu that his fundamental duty was to love

and nurture the subjects of Moyna. In Ram'das Adak's account, this instruction specifically included a reminder about the rate of the land tax (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 199a). In Ghanaram's account he entrusted to Kālu the lives, lineages, and *jatis* of the city's young women, whom Kālu was to treat as his mother (Mahapatra 1962: 566). According to both authors, Lausen told Kālu to continue to be the city's magistrate and head of police (*kotal*) during the night, but its *raja* in the daytime (Mahapatra 1962:566; Cattopadhyaya 1938:199a). Concluding his instructions to the city, Lausen told Lakhe to protect the city from enemy attacks, and he told Kālu to make sure that no one, whether invited guests, or blind, crippled, or ailing beggars should go without food. Kālu should worship Dharma "in the land," send plenty of money for the care of Lausen's parents, and write a report on their condition to Lausen each month (Mahapatra 1962: 566–7).

Mahamad then invented an excuse to take command of the entire army of Gauresvar and lead it to Moyna. He claimed Moyna was being ravaged and depopulated by a wild rhinoceros, and added that if Kālu were to act "impudently" in the manner of Ichai Ghosh, the king's army would be able to give him a proper punishment.

It is clear that Kālu failed to fulfill his new responsibilities; moreover, that failure is represented as an almost inevitable consequence of his nature as a *Ḍom*, but his failure also involved an offense to the goddess in her violent aspect as Bhadrakali. All texts agree that when the army of the minister was discovered, Kālu arranged to worship the goddess before going into battle. According to Ghanaram, instruction to perform this worship came in a dream, carried by Hanuman at the command of Dharma himself, but his wife Lakhe also supported worship of Bhadrakali as their "lineage deity" (Mahapatra 1962: 597). Kālu went to the toddy makers to buy wine with which to worship the goddess (Mahapatra 1962: 595–9; compare Cattopadhyaya 1938: 209–10). He and the *Ḍom* men invited the goddess to their worship, but then they got "drunk on wine and meat," and forgot to make the offerings to her. Enraged by this omission, she vowed to destroy Kālu and his lineage. Meantime, according to Ghanaram, after commandeering and consuming a second supply of wine, and after threatening to have sex with the toddy makers' women, and after being carried home

by Lakhe, Kālu passed out (Mahapatra 1962: 601–02). In Ram'das Adak's account, Kālu did not remain unconscious, although he did momentarily lose consciousness from drink, nor did Lakhe carry him home. Instead, by asking her to pierce a stone in the wrestling *akhara* with an arrow from her bow, he proved her ability to fight before delegating the defense of Moyna to her.<sup>90</sup> Despite the somewhat more favorable representation of Kālu's actions by Ram'das Adak, one cannot escape a conservative reinforcement of masculine *jati* role boundaries in this episode. *Ḍom* men will be *Ḍoms*; therefore Kālu cannot be a raja.

Unable to rouse her husband from his stupor, Lakhe then confronted the minister, after vowing to “repay the debt” of salt their family owed to Lausen. It is also clear that, unlike Kālu, she fulfilled her responsibilities to defend the city for her raja. She disbelieved the minister's lie that Lausen had died of starvation. In a decision which again reinforces *jati* boundaries, she refused the minister's offer to establish Kālu as raja in Moyna, despite his promise that she herself would become queen of the city, and that Lausen's four wives would become her own slaves (Mahapatra 1962: 603–05). She worshiped the goddess before going into battle, promising her a (battle) sacrifice of 100,000 elephants, horses and humans (Mahapatra 1962: 607). With the assistance of the goddess, whose forms she invoked to guard the four gates of the city, she defeated the minister's army, slaughtered a third of his forces, and drove the survivors back across the Kalindi river.

Perhaps we must accept the idea that one-day's engagement was all that Lakhe could do, or perhaps she only intended to shame males in her family by an exemplary display of heroism. While the minister rallied his remaining forces, Lakhe first tried and failed to arouse Kālu, and then persuaded her eldest son Saka to take her place in battle. In these passages we are given, along with further instruction in the *dharma* of subalterns, model performances of the shaming of a man by a wife or mother, who thereby becomes “the guardian and guarantor of honor” (Harlan 2003: 99, 96–113). Ghanaram has Lakhe, returned from battle, say to her husband: “When has any hero who found himself in danger knocked back his wine and stayed drunk while a girl fights?” (Mahapatra 1962: 621). When her son hesitated to fight, Lakhe also shamed him for

feeling fear before battle though he had suckled her own milk, for hoping to pass his youth in dalliance with his young wife rather than going into battle, and for not fearing to see his own mother cry wretchedly in his presence. After Lakhe had departed raging (*garjjane*), Saka's wife also reminded her husband that "to insult the salt of king is a gathering of sins," that "life and death are in the hands of the Lord," and that he would "awaken renown throughout the world by going to victory," and gain the path to liberation by dying in battle (Mahapatra 1962: 623; compare Cattopadhyaya 1938: 218a). Because of the curse of the goddess against Kālu's lineage, Saka was killed in single combat by a low-born opponent, a *pan-vendor* by *jati*; but he also killed that opponent.<sup>91</sup> A servant cut off Saka's head, and returned it to Lakhe, who embraced and kissed it, and preserved it for possible revival, if and when Lausen should return.

Lakhe then appealed to her second son. He led the whole company of Ḍoms into battle and defeated some elite forces of the minister's army, some of it Rajputs and foreign Muslims. After this victory the Ḍoms returned to bathe in the Kalindi river before re-entering the city of Moyna (according to Ram'das Adak, they wished to purify themselves of the great sin of slaughtering humans; according to Ghanaram, they merely began to play in the water) (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 220; Mahapatra 1962: 630). They left their weapons on the bank. A foot soldier from the minister's army discovered them, and quietly stole their weapons. The minister then led a group of soldiers to the riverbank, and ambushed the weaponless Ḍoms, raining bullets on them like a hailstorm.<sup>92</sup> In this story no doubt there is a practical lesson about the need to be continually on guard, given the unchivalrous nature of warfare with gunpowder weapons.

At last Kālu roused himself. No one in the minister's army dared to face him, except his own younger brother, a man who had not accompanied Kālu and the Ḍoms to Moyna. This man, Kamba or Kemo Ḍom, pretended to have been disgraced and exiled by the minister, and, having got Kālu to vow to give him whatever he asked, he demanded that Kālu cut off his own head. Kālu understood that he had to preserve the "truth" of his unwise vow for Lausen to have a chance to succeed at Hakanda (Mahapatra 1962: 636;

Cattopadhyaya 1938: 221b), and although he had to ask his brother to accomplish this terrible deed, the severing of his head certainly is an analogue of Lausen's own self-sacrifice. Lakhe, however, cut off Kemo's head with an ax. She then preserved Kālu's head for revival. Having shamed sons and husband, Lakhe thus also became a devoted "victim of loss"; if this were a Rajput legend, she would be expected to immolate herself to prove herself a *patibrata*, a courageous and perfectly devoted wife (Harlan 2003: 104). Is it because she is only a Ḍom woman that Lakhe need not make this compensatory self-sacrifice?

Instead, Lakhe carried the news to Lausen's first wife Kalinga in the palace. Kalinga, despite having no practice in the art of war, resolved to go to battle, authoritatively refusing Kanara's offer to take her place. Kanara told her that her fine dress and ornaments would make people call her a "dancer of Golahat," and suggested wisely that she "dress as a man when going near a man" (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 223a). Kalinga, who never before had worn "shirt or trousers," kept as the signs of wifedom her conch bangle and the *tilak* on her forehead. She went before the minister, and introduced herself. According to Ghanaram, she attempted to shame the minister for this very result, his being prepared to do battle with a woman. She said, "What Hai or Ḍom anywhere ever did such a worthless and evil thing!" But he skillfully redirected the shame back towards her. "For what purpose does a young woman prepare herself and come among the foreign Muslims? In her breast there is no fear of the lineage" (Mahapatra 1962: 642). Denying that she truly was the wife of his nephew Lausen, he commanded the Muslim soldiers to attack her. According to Ram'das Adak, Kalinga thought: "Lest the enemy Muslims seize me with their two hands! A woman's *jati* is lost at the touch of a Muslim. Then Lord Dharma will not allow the Sun to rise in the west, and my husband's mother and father will not be released, and the Lord certainly will abandon my lord" (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 223b-224a). All authors agree that because Kalinga feared to lose her *jati* to the touch of Muslims, she stabbed herself in the womb (*jathare*) and died. According to Ram'das Adak, when they saw her suicide, the Muslim soldiers did not touch her, but said approvingly, "She was very much the daughter of a Hindu, she was of a very haughty (*teri*) race"



(Cattopadhyaya 1938: 224a). Her mare carried Kalinga's corpse back to the palace of Moyna, and Kanara preserved her body.

We may pause to consider a theme of disabling misjudgments about the nature of war. Kālu's older son Saka went honorably into single combat to the death, instead of leading the city's soldiers into battle. Kālu's younger son Suka failed to post a guard over the Doms' weapons while they bathed after withdrawing from battle, and he may have been too concerned about their ritual impurity. Kālu himself misjudged the character of his brother, and relying on the latter's honor, gave him an unlimited promise. Kalinga, finally, seems to have thought that by appealing to the minister's sense of honor she could persuade him to abandon his attack. Instead, he threatened her honor and caused her suicide. In this last case, all the elements of a story of a heroic woman (*virangana*) are present: Kalinga violated purdah, took her husband's place on the battlefield, and then committed suicide to demonstrate the purity of her intent despite this transgression of roles. Her actions, however, lack the beneficial consequences to be expected from heroic women, since she neither saved her land, nor inflicted harm upon the enemy, nor inspired her husband to greater courage.<sup>93</sup> Instead, we are told that for Lausen to succeed at Hakanda, two of his subalterns, regardless of practical considerations, had to sacrifice themselves when honor required it.

The only person left to defend Moyna, finally, was Kanara. Kanara worshiped the goddess before venturing into battle, and secured the promise of her assistance. As they already had done on the occasion of her bride's choice, Kanara, her maidservant Dhumasi, and the goddess defeated the army and captured the minister. As we have noted, the goddess persuaded her not to kill Mahamad, but to dishonor and punish him, and to send him back to Gaur. In Ram'das Adak's account, the goddess not only warned Kanara that killing this elder relative would be a worthless deed (*char karmma*), but she also shamed her for letting her hair become uncovered, (also Cattopadhyaya 1938: 226b; Mahapatra 1962: 658) thus returning her to more confined and modest wifely behavior. Kanara, however, already had fought as a heroic warrior before her marriage. Her participation in this battle is not exceptional for her character; moreover, she was accompanied by Dhumasi and preceded by Lakhe

as well. In all these ways *Dharma Maṅgal* normalize her status as a warrior and make it part of her character, rather than dependent on her identity as Lausen's wife and "half-body"; indeed, this latter term is not used in the episode. Unlike the heroic women of most Rajput legends, she notably did not have to commit suicide to demonstrate her purity of intent (cf. Harlan 1992: 201–04).

At Hakanda, Lausen's meditation was broken by a sense of disaster. He sought and received news from Kanara, and so learned that his most beloved wife Kalinga had died. Initially he wished to abandon his austerities. His female adept, the same woman who had guided Rañjabati's austerities to gain his birth, told him to persevere, and began his final instructions (Mahapatra 1962: 669–72; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 228b–32b).

We can conclude by summarizing the transformations in the roles of Lausen's subalterns. The female warriors Lakhe and Kanara worshiped the goddess and succeeded in battle with her assistance; moreover, they also preserved the heads or the corpses of their relatives who had been slain, so that they could be revived when Lausen returned. Kālu and Kalinga, on the other hand, failed to worship the goddess before entering into battle, and were placed in situations where they had to sacrifice themselves to preserve their honor before they could even begin to fight. Of the two roles, battle and self-sacrifice, battle is given to the one who is the inferior in both pairs, that is, to the Ḍom wife, and to the younger of the two co-wives. For both Kālu and the senior wife Kalinga, we are told that self-sacrifice was necessary for Lausen's success at Hakanda, but a theme of misjudgment and misplaced emphasis on honor, also common to Kālu and Kalinga, suggests that success in battle may be the more important of these two roles, at least at Moyna. Ultimately, we are left with a simplified tableaux: Lausen at Hakanda ritually sacrifices himself to secure Dharma's intervention, as do all of his companions except a dog (Mahapatra 1962: 673–4); while Kanara at Moyna, by worshiping the goddess, sacrifices all who remain of the 900,000 man army of Gauresvar, successfully defending the city from attack, despite the retirement of Lakhe, the deaths of all Ḍom commanders in the army, and the death of her senior co-wife Kalinga. These two figures, Lausen and Kanara, summarize the pair of roles we have been considering. In

a structural analysis, Lausen's self-sacrifice at Hakanda is an alternative and substitute for Kanara's battlefield sacrifices. In a rhetorical analysis, we note the convenience to superiors of Lausen's new role: faced with the minister, an opponent to whom he was bound by family relationship, and a king to whom he was bound by principles of loyalty, Lausen enacted ritual violence upon his own body rather than battlefield violence upon the minister's or the king's body.

The shift in roles by Lausen's subalterns is accompanied by a further shift in the role of the goddess, who becomes Moyna's divine protectress in Lausen's absence. Both the goddess's role of defending Moyna and her worship by Lakhe and Kanara complement and are subordinated to Dharma's role and worship. *Dharma Maṅgal* texts thus partly erase their own representation of the goddess as a supporter of "independent" rebels.

### Epilogue

At Hakanda, Lausen, his female adept Samula, his Brahman priest, and his twelve *bhaktas* all sacrificed their lives in the attempt to secure Dharma's intervention and sunrise in the west. When Lausen had been dead for three days, Dharma finally was agitated by the "sins" of these sacrifices, and left his remote place in heaven to restore all to life. Lausen then asked for and received the boon of sunrise in the west, and following this triumph he returned with his companions to Gaur. Details of his self-sacrifice, and negotiations between Dharma and the Sun both have an obvious relevance to rituals of the Gājan (cf. chapter 3 of this volume).

Here we can briefly note the climax and resolution of Lausen's conflict with the minister Mahamad in Gaur. The minister claimed to disbelieve Lausen's account of sunrise in the west, and Lausen called his drummer at Hakanda, Harihar Baiti, to be a witness to the truthfulness of his account. The minister bribed Harihar to lie, but Dharma himself put the goddess of wisdom in his mouth, and Harihar told the truth in the assembly. Mahamad then arranged for Harihar to be caught with the wealth he had given him as a bribe, and to be charged as a thief. Punishment would be execution by the ordeal of impalement on a stake or trident. Hanuman, however,

lifted Harihar up, and took him bodily and visibly in his chariot to heaven. The watching assembly was astounded (Mahapatra 1962: 692–700; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 239a-241a). The minister then explained to everyone that Harihar's deliverance had happened because of the particular auspiciousness of the moment (Ghanaram), or because of a divinity within the impalement stake (Ram'das Adak), not because Harihar was anything but a sinner. Deluded or constrained to act in accord with this contrived explanation, the minister then called each of his six sons, including an infant, and made them undergo the same ordeal, thinking that they also would attain heaven. He thus forced his sons to undergo a form of truth ordeal by self-sacrifice, but they were tainted by their father's sins, and perhaps by their own as well. Hanuman gave each one a blow, and all were impaled and died.<sup>94</sup>

Being made sonless is a comic retribution for Mahamad's many attempts to make his youngest sister a sonless woman, but Rañjābatī asked Lausen to restore Mahamad's infant son to life, so that her father's lineage would not be extinguished. Lausen complied with this request. Again the assembly was astounded, and praised him. As Lausen and his family took leave of Gauresvar, however, the minister contrived a final stratagem. Although his dead infant had been returned to him alive, Mahamad complained that the 900,000 men of the army were still dead; Lausen should revive them before departing. For this blatant attempt to re-acquire military power, Lausen afflicted Mahamad with leprosy, while promising all that the army later would be revived.<sup>95</sup> Parts of the minister's body rotted, and the putrid smell brought buzzing flies and made everyone withdraw or put cloths to their noses. The king finally acknowledged that Mahamad, Lausen's uncle, had caused all of Lausen's troubles. Lausen pointedly added that Mahamad never had shown any mercy to the "party of his family." The king then begged Lausen nevertheless to show mercy, because "my minister is your maternal relative," and Lausen restored Mahamad's body to health, leaving only his face with the white sign of the illness for his having spoken ill of Dharma (Mahapatra 1962:703–04). Facial mutilation must remind us of the punishment of Suriksa; it is the final way these two manipulative characters are aligned. Does the terrible impurity of leprosy render

Mahamad unfit for his office thereafter?<sup>96</sup> Note that Lausen did not in any further way interfere with the governance of Gaur, but neither did he owe Gauresvar any further service.

Honored by the king and worshiped by the court, Lausen then returned to Moyna with his mother, father, and brother. At Moyna he restored all the dead to life, beginning with the 900,000-man army of Gauresvar (only Ghanaram states that they all returned to Gaur) (Mahapatra 1962: 705), and including his wife Kanara and Kālu and the Ḍom men. After Lausen had ruled for an indefinite time, the Kali Age approached, and Hanuman came to take him, Karpur, his mother, father and wives, and all of his companions at Hakanda to heaven, so that they would not have to endure its corruption.

*Dharma Maṅgal* conclude with a comic account of those who accepted and those who declined the invitation to heaven and liberation. Lausen's father Karṇasen decided to stay in Moyna because Lausen's son was not of age to rule, and he could not allow the kingdom to be "looted by servants." Rañjābatī, as a faithful wife, decided to stay with her husband (according to Ghanaram, she nevertheless would return to heaven at a later time). All four of Lausen's wives accompanied Lausen to heaven. Samula the female adept, the Brahman, and the twelve *bhaktas* who all had accompanied Lausen to Hakanda and who had already died once, eagerly accepted the invitation. Kālu, who also had been killed once, and sacrificed himself once, eagerly accepted the invitation, because he thought heaven would have plenty of wine and meat (Ghanaram specifies pork), but just for this reason he was excluded. Ram'das Adak adds that Lakhe, as a faithful wife, decided to stay with her husband. According to this author, in compensation Lausen promised both Kālu and Lakhe posthumous cults as village godlings.<sup>97</sup>

## CONCLUSION

### Exemplary and Morally Privative Roles

We have discussed four roles for the hero Lausen and his brother Karpur: warrior, raja, advisor or minister, and renunciate adept of

Dharma. For creating warriors in Bengal, *Dharma Maṅgal* texts emphasized the disciplines of the wrestling arena: its physical training, the mental and physical regimen of chastity, and the subtle energy which Hanuman communicated to his young disciple, which in turn supported Lausen's bodily strength and endurance, and marked his transition to adulthood. Lausen's comic triumph on the wrestling ground seems designed to cathect a male audience's anxiety about the potentially crippling effects of protective motherly love. Sons must be free to risk their lives for the sake of demonstrating their "virility." Demonstrating "virility" enables one to "awaken renown," and renown is necessary for the transition from warrior to raja. Demonstrating "virility" in turn requires the mental and physical discipline of celibacy during a campaign. When controlled by lust, warriors lose their spiritual "energy" and fail in battle. *Dharma Maṅgal* also cathect a male audience's doubt that they have established patriarchal rule over women, and their fear in general of female sexuality. Apparently, anxieties about both maternal and erotic love were implicated in the cultural reproduction of warrior sons.

A warrior becomes a raja by acquiring military retainers, wives and allies secured by marriage alliances, and land as a gift from his overlord. He then must settle his land by just and generous rule. Without a land, a warrior is only a servant (*cakar, cakuri*) and is completely dependent on his lord.<sup>98</sup> The foremost obligation of a raja, however, is to "repay the debt of salt" owed to his overlord, who has given him a land and its income, by giving military service to the overlord whenever called upon. Textual associations between the "debt of salt" and the gift of a land tend to make the obligation to obey as permanent as the gift of a land, which *Dharma Maṅgal* texts describe as being authorized and recorded for posterity by a sealed royal document (*par'oana*) (Mahapatra 1962: 345–46; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 148b). Ghanaram's *Dharma Maṅgal* repeatedly expresses the more absolute Mughal ideal of fealty, rather than a voluntary and conditional agreement to obey the overlord.

Lausen was asked to "repay the king's salt" by suppressing rebels against his overlord Gauresvar, and by collecting and delivering the taxes they owed. The fable of the tiger Kamadal provides us with a

model of typical features of a rebel; because of his natural, inborn flaws of greed and treachery, and with support from the goddess, he became a “gathering of sins” and caused a land’s depopulation, returning it to a forest where the only relations were those of hunting. Of course, the most important of the rebels who were supported by the goddess and whom Lausen had to defeat was Ichai Ghosh, who also had usurped the original land of Lausen’s father. Usually, rebels must be defeated in battle, but if they agree to pay outstanding taxes to their overlord, they can be re-integrated into his polity, as was Karpur’dhal (the raja of Kanur and Kalinga’s father). Rebels are the morally privative correlative of loyal rajas, and they are likely to be controlled by greed. They consistently worship the goddess and initially receive her protection.

Lausen also faced opponents who were not outright rebels, but who were motivated by greed or lust, and who did subvert proper order. Instead of practicing a confrontational politics of rebellion, such opponents used rhetoric, seduction, and stratagems to control from a position formally inferior in a relationship. Both Ghanaram’s and Ram’das Adak’s texts proverbially link manipulative wives and ministers as threats to moral order. Seductive and manipulative opponents also must be defeated, but battle apparently is not an appropriate means to use against them. Of course, the minister Mahamad is the most important of these opponents, but another is the matriarch and “dancer” of Golahat, Suriksa. Although initially both receive some support from the goddess, she also ultimately abandons both. The goddess is not as consistently allied with seductive opponents as she is with rebels.

Finally, we have discussed the link between Lausen’s role as advisor to and substitute for his overlord, and his role as a renunciate adept of Dharma, the role in which he underwent self-sacrifice as a truth ordeal. Of course he was joined in this role by all of his companions at Hakanda. Furthermore, both Kalinga and Kālu enacted inferior versions of this role when they sacrificed their lives for the sake of honor before Moyna. In Lausen’s case, self-sacrifice gave him both a coercive power over Dharma without changing his status as a loyal and submissive devotee, and a share in worship which belonged to and benefited his overlord, without requiring



Lausen to usurp the overlord's throne. Mahamad, who consistently acted as a manipulative and selfish minister to the king, enacted the morally privative version of the role of Dharma's adept, first when he worshiped Dharma improperly, and then when he forced the truth ordeal of the stake upon his six sons.

### Kālu, Lakhe and the Doms

Like low status martial assistants of heroes in north and south Indian oral epics, Kālu is introduced as a man of prodigious strength and appetite. These two characteristics summarize both the potential and the problem in integrating "wild" people from the lowest *jatis* into a local armed force and land.<sup>99</sup> He was loyal to Lausen, but not to Gauresvar, and his appetitive nature and lack of culture made him subject to errors of judgment and to manipulation by others. When Lausen sought an introduction, Kālu immediately mentioned that his wife Lakhe was his superior as a warrior; this seems to be a feature peculiar to *Dharma Maṅgal*, and may be one of the ways warrior culture was re-imagined in a Bengali context. Lakhe integrates from below the two roles of a warrior's wife, mother and female warrior, as Lausen integrates from above the roles of raja and minister or advisor to the king.

Kālu and the Doms had to abandon at least some of their traditional livelihood, and adopt at least some customs of higher *jati* Hindus in order to be employed as military retainers. The Doms were like other "untouchable" military retainers in other armies, the Candals in the army of Ichai Ghosh, and foreign Muslims in the army of Gauresvar; but both of the latter apparently did not change any of their customs. Candals were perhaps worse than Doms; still, Kālu could not change his "natural" appetites for opium and alcohol, and could not substitute for Lausen as a raja.

Kālu committed a series of minor offenses against the goddess, first during the siege of Kanur, second when he wanted to take revenge against Kanara for the deaths of the soldiers of Gauresvar, but was prevented by an opium-induced stupor, and third when he fished in the Ajay river. Finally, his most serious offense was getting drunk and failing to make offerings of wine and meat to the goddess

before fighting against the minister at Moyna. His offenses to the goddess partly fit the plot lines of other heroes' epics, but Kālu's offenses bring a temporary disaster upon himself and his lineage, rather than attaching blame to Lausen and requiring his defeat and death. In addition, Kālu was allowed to redeem himself by being true to his own oath, and by suffering a kind of self-sacrifice. The low-*jati* author Ram'das Adak consistently portrays Kālu more favorably than does Ghanaram, especially by depicting him as a devotee of Dharma. Moreover, balancing against Kālu's faults were Lakhe's faithfulness, her heroic defense of the city and her exemplary instruction to and shaming of her two sons. On a lesser scale, the paired roles of Kālu and Lakhe are analogous to those of Lausen and Kanara in the defense of Moyna: Kālu enacted self-sacrifice, and Lakhe sacrificed her opponents to the goddess in battle. Unlike Kanara, however, there is no question that Lakhe was a virgin warrior; we have seen that she also was the mother of warrior sons.

### Kalinga and Kanara

Of the two prominent wives of Lausen, Kalinga is related to Kālu, both by his conquest of her father's land, Kanur, and by their common self-sacrifice to keep truth in the defense of Moyna. We also have suggested a relation between Kalinga and Suriksa, the queen and dancer of Golahat. When Kalinga first ventured into battle, Kanara criticized her for wearing dress and ornaments that were too feminine, and thus opening herself to the charge that she was a "dancing woman of Golahat," Suriksa's city. Moreover, both she and Suriksa suffered a somewhat displaced genital mutilation, Suriksa by being blinded, and Kalinga by falling on her own sword so that her womb was impaled. In Kalinga's case, was this mutilation also punishment for being the non-virgin wife of Lausen, the mother of his son, and the woman with whom he was accused of being engrossed in loveplay? Kalinga offended against her husband's wartime chastity, especially on the night before Lausen departed for battle against Ichai. According to Ghanaram, Kalinga excluded women's rites and their seductive powers from her wedding ritual,

but these appearances to the contrary, at a deeper level of analysis, she embodies a subtly seductive threat to Lausen from within the marriage, and must sacrifice herself in a truth ordeal.

A heroic warrior herself, Kanara was a different kind of hero's wife. She was remarkably independent of her father, and chose Lausen as her husband despite the military intervention of Gauresvar and the minister, and despite the initial opposition of Lausen himself. As a wife, she always was properly deferential to her elder co-wives, but, according to Narasimha Basu, she improperly advised Lausen to rebel against Gauresvar. Does she embody a subtly rebellious threat? Kanara worshiped the goddess (who earlier had supported rebels), and Kanara never lost the goddess's support. She sacrificed the army of Gauresvar in battle before Moyna. Her ability to resist the minister's attacks against Moyna was potentially the ability to rebel.

*Dharma Maṅgal* create two quite different models for a hero's wife, by splitting the typical pattern of action for a *virangana*, a heroic woman. Kalinga was a beloved wife and mother. Only in her husband's absence, and with the death of his entire army did she emerge from purdah to take his place on the battlefield before Moyna. Following this transgression, she proved herself a *patibrata*, a perfectly devoted wife, by committing suicide; but she died on the battlefield before any engagement in battle, rather than after being successful and returning home. Kanara, on the other hand, did not assume the role of warrior only in Lausen's absence; she already had fought as an unmarried virgin. Her valor was part of her character. Nor did she prove the purity of her motives by suicide following the battle. Ghanaram suggests that she remained a virgin, and certainly she never became a mother. Instabilities inherent in this splitting of the role of *virangana* reveal problems within it: a high-*jati* woman cannot easily be a mother and a warrior at the same time (cf. Harlav 2003: 147–48, 206–07). On the other hand, Lakhe, the Dom woman, was wife, mother, and *virangana*. In fact, the thirteen sons she had borne are mentioned by Ram'das Adak just before her battle (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 211a). Perhaps the low status or the residual wildness of her *jati* makes it possible for her to combine all three roles.

More important to differences between the characters of Kalinga and Kanara is the functional distinction between minister and manipulator on the one hand, and warrior and rebel on the other. Plot details suggest that each wife is colored by characteristics of one of the two different kinds of opponents whom Lausen faces: Kalinga by those of a seductive manipulator, and Kanara by those of a rebel. Certainly, in the defense of Moyna Kalinga enacts the role of offering herself as a sacrifice to defend truth and honor, while Kanara enacts the role of sacrificing opponents on the battlefield.

### Battlefield Sacrifices and Self-sacrifice

Lausen and all his subalterns who sacrificed themselves at Moyna had come to participate in the authority of their superior raja or *maharaja*. Lausen's defeat of Ichai seemed to place him in a position to challenge and supplant the king, but for Lausen the crucial transition came when he was asked to intervene to make the floods recede from Gaur. Acting as an ascetic, not a warrior, he assumed functions of the king himself, stopping rains and dispersing the flood by meditation. By his actions at Hakanda to save Gaur from the king's sins, he took the place of the king and perhaps substituted for the "compensatory rectitude" of a self-inflicted death by the king, a form of suicide "penetential in the mode of asceticism" (Harlan 2003: 98). Lausen moved from the role of raja to the role of minister, and so mediated between the opposition formed by these fundamentally different roles.

To Kālu, of course, Lausen deputed the authority of raja during Lausen's absence from Moyna. As senior co-wife, Kalinga also received from Lausen authority over his other wives, and after the death of Kālu she assumed the role of deciding how to defend the city. Lakhe and Kanara, the subalterns of Lausen who successfully fought against the minister at Moyna, were not given a share of Lausen's authority as raja. Our analysis suggests that warriors embody the subtle threat of rebellion, and must prove themselves by offering "sacrifices" of their superior's enemies on the battlefield, whereas people who participate in a raja's authority embody the subtle threat

of seduction and manipulation, and must prove themselves by a ritual and sacrificial ordeal which establishes their “truth.”

### Lord Dharma and the Goddess

*Dharma Maṅgal* rewrite the character of the goddess in two steps. The first step makes her a goddess of forests, localities, and rebels, and sets her in opposition to the career of Lausen as a raja who recruits Doms, settles forests and is loyal to his overlord. This plot development culminates in the contest between Lausen and Ichai, in which only a clever stratagem by Dharma and all the gods makes possible Lausen’s victory over Ichai and the goddess. The second step makes the goddess the chosen deity of Kanara, the heroic warrior bride, and thus partly allies the goddess with Lausen, Kanara’s proper husband. This plot development culminates in the battle at Moyna between Kanara and the minister, and in the minister’s defeat at the hands of Kanara, her maidservant Dhumasi, and the goddess.

In general, Dharma supports settlement of land against hunters of the forest, and he supports Gauresvar the overlord against rebellious local rajas. These commitments usually make him antagonistic to the goddess. In the defense of Kanara’s bride’s choice, and in the defense of Moyna, however, the two deities cooperated. In both cases the goddess again defended a locality and its raja from attacks by the army of Gauresvar, but whereas earlier the army’s attacks had been organized to enforce legitimate rights of Gauresvar to obedience and to his share of local revenue, in both of these latter cases the attacks were illegitimate. If only by remaining passive, Dharma allowed the goddess to succeed in the legitimate defense of the land of Moyna.

In *Dharma Maṅgal* the goddess usually is worshiped by offering sacrificial victims, who may be animal or human, and whose sacrifices may be ritual ones or slaughter on a battlefield. Her worship seems to be most appealing to local rajas, rebels, and independent women. Dharma best is worshiped by undergoing what we have called “truth ordeals,” and ultimately, by the ritual self-sacrifice of someone who is a righteous devotee, and Dharma’s worship seems to be linked to

the function of a minister or advisor. Lausen, however, worshiped both Dharma and the goddess, as he similarly moved from the roles of warrior and raja to those of minister and substitute for the king.

No one participated more often or more improperly in Gauresvar's authority as overlord than the minister Mahamad. To establish a new form of worship in the Kālī age, Dharma needed this seductive and manipulative opponent to act as Lausen's foil. At the crucial point in the plot, the minister decided to engage in the worship of Dharma for selfish and evil purposes, an act which Ghanaram describes as performing righteous acts (*sattvik karma*) while "thinking with strands of darkness" (*tamogune cinte*) (Mahapatra 1962: 550). He states that the minister's decision was the result of Dharma's own plan (Mahapatra 1962: 561). After Lausen had saved Gaur from the resulting floods, the minister intervened a second time, raising the stakes of Lausen's assumption of royal roles, to demand that Lausen act on behalf of the king to produce sunrise in the west, and thus to cleanse the king of his sins. Sunrise in the west, in turn, required Lausen's self-sacrifice, the form of worship for the Kālī age which Dharma all along had intended to revive. Of Lausen's two opponents, the minister thus was much more closely associated with the reintroduction of this form of Dharma's worship than was the rebel Ichai. Finally, the minister was punished justly when he ordered his sons to undergo a series of truth ordeals, which they all failed. As the organizer of a selfish and incomplete royal worship of Dharma, and the corrupter of sworn testimony to the truth, the minister was an appropriate foil for correct worship of Dharma and for proper truth ordeals. His functions in the plot closely link him to Dharma as a manipulative opponent, and confirm our analysis of contrasts between warrior worshipers of the goddess and ministerial worshipers of Dharma.

Lausen became a warrior and raja, but then he also became a kind of "minister" who participated in his overlord's authority. He thus mediates the structural opposition of roles explored by *Dharma Maṅgal*. Lausen worships both the goddess and Dharma, but his worship of Dharma is more important, as his ministerial functions and his self-sacrifice at Hakaa are more important than his role as a warrior and his battlefield sacrifices. Despite naturalizing warrior

culture in Bengal, these *Dharma Maṅgal* texts also subordinate the *sakti* of warriors to a superior discipline, one proved by the worship of Dharma in general, and by self-sacrifice in truth ordeals in particular.

By analyzing Lausen's quest to become a raja rather than Dharma's quest for more widespread worship or for worship by the "complete" rite of the *baramati*, this essay necessarily has left many important questions to await further study. One task is to compare carefully the descriptions in different *Dharma Maṅgal* of Rañjābatī's and Lausen's worship of Dharma in the rites which lead up to and include their acts of self-sacrifice. A related task is to compare these representations of Dharma worship to the Gājan as it has been described in the twentieth century. Taken together, both analyses might reveal ritual changes apart from those associated with the introduction of the Śiva Gājan, changes which Ralph W. Nicholas studies in this volume. A third task is to analyze the corpus of Bengali *Sibayana* texts for their relation to peasants, to themes of fertility, and to the Śiva Gājan, and for possible contrasts to *Dharma Maṅgal* texts.<sup>100</sup> Ultimately, one would hope to be able to describe different relations among patrons, authors, performers, and audiences, for both sets of texts seem to have been written and performed for villagers on the occasion of the Gājan.

## NOTES

1. Elite Hindu Bengali males both accepted and resisted the British colonial stereotype defining them as "effeminate". See Mrinalini Sinha (1995).
2. I use the word "raja" here rather than "king" because in an ideology of distributed sovereignty I want to distinguish between rajas and the *maharaja*, their overlord, for whom I will reserve the word "king" (Das 1997: 127–34).
3. In the ritual, however, the *loue* goats are more directly related to Hariscandra's son Luicandra whose story is recited on the night when the goats are sacrificed (Chattopadhyay 1942: 125).
4. *Ramayana*, *Aranyakanda*, 30.17. Compare Maiti (c2001: 12b, 284b): "Is anyone able to become a devotee equal to Ravana, who offered worship to Dharma by cutting off his ten heads?" [letters after the page number indicate columns].



5. In *Caṇḍī Maṅgal* the goddess had authorized not rebellion, but a more pacific polity and society. To be sure, the peaceful resolution of conflict she authorized included recognition of an upstart, jungly, and in some ways a “rebel” kingdom by a high *jati* Hindu overlord. (Curley 2001: 299–324).
6. The exceptional author is Rajaram Das from Sikharbali village in Twenty-four Parganas Bhattacharya 1975: 747–9) and for the location of Dharma Gājan, p. 617); In a later work the same author has noted that Dharma is associated with Sun worship over a much broader area than that where Dharma Gājan are or were celebrated (Bhattacharya 1977: 8–41).
7. For this important revision to Ruparam's date, see Mukhopadhyay (1993: 201–08).
8. Kayal and Deva 1974.
9. I owe to Ralph W. Nicholas the observation that because Gops often must fight over common or undemarcated pastures, they have a reputation for violence in Mursidabad district.
10. Cattopadhyaya 1938: 16; and Mahapatra 1962: 32, where Ichai asks her to make him “independent” (*svatantar*).
11. I owe this suggestion to Aditi Nath Sarkar.
12. Cattopadhyaya (1938: 168a), the first battle with Kanara and her maidservant; p. 215a, the battle with Lakhe, a Dom woman of Lausen's city; and p. 223b, the battle with Lausen's wife Kalinga. In each case the minister commands *mughal-pathan* soldiers or “Husain and Hasan” to attack the woman.
13. See Mahapatra (1962: 658), where the goddess intervenes to keep Lausen's wife Kanara from slaying the minister, whom she twice identifies as Kanara's husband's *mama*: “It is not proper to slay one who is defeated, and in addition to be honored is more important [than life] to your husband's *mama*. Save his life, daughter, and dishonor him.”
14. An exception is Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 80a, 130b), who mentions Lausen's grandfather and “sixteen houses” of patrilineal relatives in Gaur.
15. For Lausen, both the minister and the king are *kutumba* relatives, relatives through the marriage of Lausen's mother, but in the extended sense of the word, the minister is also a *jnati* or “shared body” relative of Lausen as well because he is the brother of Lausen's mother. The king, of course, is only a *kutumba* relative, since he is related only by marriage to Lausen's mother, not by “shared body.” See Inden and Nicholas (1977: 8–17; Fig. 1, p. 10).

16. (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 11b, 57a-58a). In her prior heavenly life the woman reborn as Rañjābatī had committed a condign fault that justified the punishment of earthly life (while bathing with her friends, she inadvertently splashed water on Dharma, who had taken the form of an aged Brahman). Kasyapa's son, the heavenly male reborn as Lausen, had not committed any fault, but agreed to suffer earthly existence after Dharma explained his purpose. On this point compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 26, 107–8).
17. See the illustration of Rup'ram's *Dharma Maṅgal* by Nandalal Basu (Sen, Mandal and Sen 1957: 76).
18. For Rañjābatī, compare Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 50b-51a), and Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 98–100). Note the conservative story in both poems that a threatened suicide of an impoverished Brahman male, whom Dharma meets along the way to revive Rañjābatī, would have been even worse.
19. See for example, Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 314, 332); words by which Lausen introduces his mother to those he meets on his first journey to Gaur, and at Gaur itself: *sale ye sarir tyaji puṇḍra sridharma/ sei ranja janani jathare mor janma* [she who worshipped Sri Dharma and gave up her life on the bed of needles—that very Ranja is my mother; I was born from her womb].
20. “I have heard in the Purāṇas that a father is supreme (*paratpar*), and that Rama went to the forest to preserve his father's truth. But the Vedas say that a mother is a thousand times more important than a father, and she is the essence of what is ordained, and the wish-granting tree.” According to Manik'ram Ganguli, Lausen said this to the minister when the latter asked Lausen to agree to imprison both parents (Datta and Datta 1960: 483).
21. (Bhattacharya 2000: 370); see for example, (Mahapatra 1962: 225; Cattopadhyaya 1938: 25). Like *saodagar* of several other kinds of *maṅgal kāvya*, Lausen does return from his ritual self-sacrifice with a direct vision of the deity; see Seely & Miller (2000: 327–58).
22. (Mahapatra 1962: 156, 157). Lausen's advice, *bhaktibhabe bhaja nij pati*, clearly has a double meaning.
23. In Ghanaram's account he argues that a son should provide the expenses for maintaining his aged father; Ram'das Adak adds that, “An evil son is one who eats his father's and mother's livelihood” (*upay*); (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 80b-81a).
24. Ram'das Adak 1938: 86a, Karpur to Lausen: *iname anibo rajya daksin Moyana*. Note that Ghanaram uses the word (*inam, ilam*) to describe

later land grants from Lausen to Kālu and his Ḍom followers (Cattopadhyaya 1962:347, 350).

25. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938:84a); compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 187), which emphasizes the unfair fight of the wrestlers, who gang up against Lausen.
26. Place names on the routes between Moyna and "Ucalan" (which is mentioned by all authors and which is located about 12.5 miles south of Bardhaman on the road to Ghatal) vary considerably both among different authors and in different episodes by the same author. The "Moyna" of *Dharma Maṅgal* therefore may be a partly fictitious place. Are the "Kalindi" river or the "Paduma" *bil* real places? Ghanaram's routes do suggest the Midnapur Moyna; note especially the mention of Kasijora, immediately to its north (Mahapatra 1962: 119, 486), and the Keleghai river (p. 202). Narasimha Basu's routes are less clear; note especially the mention of Mandaran and Rangamete (Rangamati) just before taking a "water path" to Moyna (Maiti c2001: 106–07). Both places are located about 15 miles southwest of Ucalan, but they are also somewhat south of a direct, westward route to Moynapur in Bankura. There is no obvious "water path" from them to either place on Rennell's map. Ram'das Adak unhelpfully mentions both Mandaran and "Kasajora." He then adds "Man'kur" (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 28), which is located on the Rup'narayan river, 20 miles north-northeast of the Midnapur Moyna and about 25 miles southeast of Mandaran. Taken together these three places may suggest Moyna in Midnapur, but if so, they describe an improbably tortuous route.
27. James Rennell, "The Provinces of Midnapour, Burdwan, Hoogly, Bissunpour & Pachete," surveyed 1769–74, MS, India Office Library and Records; now in the British Museum. For a discussion of routes and place names in *Dharma Maṅgal*, see Maiti (c2001: "Sucipatra" and map, "Gaur hate Moyna," endplate).
28. Cf. Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 106b), describing the dense forest the boys enter after leaving Moyna and crossing the "Padimar *bil*," a flooded lowland.
29. Ghanaram mentions a parallel between the departure of Lausen and Karpur for Gaur and the departure of Rama and Laksmāna for the forest three times as he begins this episode: Rañjābatī recalls the foolishness of Dasaratha in exiling his son to the forest, as a reason for not giving them permission to leave (Mahapatra 1962: 197); the people of Moyna weep as did the people of Ayodhya (1962: 201);

- and Lausen's meeting with Haridas Tamali is like Rama's meeting with Guha the Nisada king (Mahapatra 1962: 206).
30. I have taken the idea of an "internal frontier" in the history of settlement patterns of Bengal from Nicholas (1962).
  31. When the goddess came on her tiger to grant him a boon for his music, Kaladhar, a heavenly musician in Indra's court, laughed, and said, "Come back this evening and I'll take a boon from you! If I may speak the truth, you do have a mouth of honey, but I have never seen a girl mounted on a tiger!" (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 89b). For the impudence of this proposal for a clandestine and sexual meeting, as well as for ridiculing her own tiger, the goddess cursed Kaladhar that he himself would become a tiger of insatiable appetite, and that his food would be men and cattle.
  32. Jallal Sikhar not only failed to give alms to Śiva who, disguised as a yogi, had come to the gate of his palace to break the fast of Śiva's Fourteenth; but he also set dogs upon the yogi, exclaiming that yogis do not give up their troublesome demands (*janjal*) by even a bit. Compare Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 91–2); Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 219–21).
  33. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 93b): *raj'pate bagh giya basila takhan//bisalar bare bagha haila duranta/rajya dhan adhikar paila ekanta/* [Then the tiger went to the throne of the king and sat upon it. By the boon of goddess Bisala the tiger became invincible, he gained complete mastery of the kingdom and its wealth]. Compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 225).
  34. The *Caṇḍī Maṅgal* of Kabikankan Mukunda (Sen 1975: 76–78 *pad* 113–114). For a broader discussion of "hunting" in this text see Curley (2001: 301–07).
  35. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 155), however, also tells how the favorable terms of rent which Lausen gave to tenants in Moyna drew people from Gaur.
  36. Sheldon I. Pollock, in his "Introduction" to volume 3 of the *Ramayana of Valmiki* (1991: 29–43), shows that the deceptive boon given to Ravana leaves the loophole of his being killed by an incarnate god, who is both human and divine. The tiger's boon was that he would not be killed by any weapon (*astra-sastra*), by fire or by poison; Lausen struck him with a rock. See Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 242, 247). Ichai received boons at two times. The first set, according to Ghanaram, were that he would not be killed by any demonic or divine being (because of the support of the goddess he was not worried about a merely human enemy), that he would be killed only by a Vaiṣṇava,

and only by the sword of the goddess. The later boon was that if his head fell to the earth, it would be rejoined to his trunk again (Mahapatra 1962: 32–33, 531).

37. Later, after being punished, she will be compared to Surpanakha, the *raksasi* who attempted to seduce Rama; see Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 312).
38. In Mahapatra 1962: 303, 310–11, Lausen adds the condition that if he wins, he will punish Suriksa by cutting off her nose and eyes only after he has learned from Hanuman the final riddle's solution. In Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 118b), the conditional punishment, cutting off nose and ears only, is agreed upon before the riddle is propounded; and compare Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 151b), where the conditional punishment includes nose, ears and eyes.
39. Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 148a, 150b) where we are told that Suriksa has had sex with over a hundred men; and where it is added that they all have signed a deed (*dar'khast*) acknowledging their defeat.
40. White (2003: 101); Caldwell (1999: 175–77). Cf. *Goraksa Sataka*, verse 18, text and translation in Briggs (1982: 288): *Adharakhyam gudasthanam pankajamca caturdalam. Tammadhye procyate yonih kamaksa siddhavandita*. [And the *gudasthana* (is) the four-leaved lotus called *adhara*. In the midst of it is said to be the *yoni*, the “eye of love,” praised by adepts.]
41. In one version of the myth, after seducing Ahalya, Indra was cursed by her husband Gautama, and his body was covered with a thousand *yonis*. He was unable to bear the shame of this curse, and ultimately the *yonis* were changed into eyes. See O'Flaherty (1975:92, fn. 41).
42. To prove his identity as the son of Karṇasen, Lausen must defeat the king's own trained war elephant in single combat, and then he must restore that elephant to life.
43. Mitra 1972: 107; Chattopadhyay 1942: 112; Nicholas, Chapter 2, in this volume.
44. Kolff 1990: 74–83. Kolff relies on the “Lay of Alha” and the “Prithiraja Rasau” for much of this analysis.
45. Cattopadhyaya 1938:148b; and compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 345–46), which also specifies an order in writing (*likhan parayana*) for the “*jagari*” grant of land in Moyna.
46. The expression and its variants, which certainly antedate Mughal rule, are commonplace in all three texts.
47. Hildebeitel 2001: 58 calls such characters “low status, ritual service companions (LSRSCs),” emphasizing as their distinctive characteristic not low caste status but “low ritual service,” for example, cremating

the dead. Such low ritual service does not seem to be a characteristic of Kālu.

48. Compare Bhattacharya (2000:370–3). She, however, does not note the special role of foreign Muslim (*mughal-pathan*) troops in Gauresvar's army.
49. Supporting this kind of question, Mayur Bhatta makes Kālu and the Ḍoms the ones the minister ordered to steal and murder Lausen when he was a baby (Kayal & Deva 1974: 18–19), where Kālu relates this history to Lausen at their first meeting.
50. In 1872 Dalton (1960:326) wrote. "... [T]hey are to be found in all parts of Bengal and north India, living on the outskirts of villages. They are seldom seen working in the fields; they are employed to kill dogs and remove dead bodies, and sometimes as executioners, and when they have none of these congenial tasks to perform, they make baskets."
51. The Maghaiya (= Magahiya, Magadhiya) Ḍoms first were described as a "criminal caste" in the 1870s, in part because some had remained wanderers. Schemes were devised to concentrate them in settlements. See Yang (1985:108–127).
52. Hunter (1875: vol. 7,46), describing Ḍoms in Maldah; and (vol. 8, 180), describing Ḍoms in Bogra.
53. Hunter (1875: vol. 11, 51) describing Ḍoms in Patna; and (vol. 14, 77) describing Ḍoms in Bhagalpur.
54. According to Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 210–11), Kālu says to Lakhe: "I know how much strength you have. You can leap across the Sarasvati's waters. When you were a virgin in your mother and father's house, your arrow fell upon the gates of Lanka."
55. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 151a), describing Kālu's wife Lakhe: "If she could sell the goods of her livelihood in the market, then there would be food, but since food is not written on her forehead, her own head is eaten." See also p. 152a, describing the Ḍom women in general: "Without food they sold their honor in the market and ate."
56. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya (1938: 150) and Mayur Bhatta (Kayal & Deva 1974: 23), describe a meal given to Kālu and the Ḍoms by Lausen's mother in Lausen's palace.
57. Mayur Bhatta (Kayal & Deva 1974: 23), Lausen to Kālu: "You suffer from being born to destitution. Destitution makes so many troubles increase. Poverty will cause people to ridicule you and destroy a hundred virtues."
58. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 150b): Kālu received "eight *kuras* of land, three *kuras* of wet land and two *kuras* of dry land" (one

- kura* is one-third of an acre). Compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 346), where Kālu asserts that he is the servant of no one, and Manik'ram (Datta & Datta 1960: 310), where Kālu asserts that "we are servants of the king from the breaking up of the kingdom. While we have lived for eight generations here in Ramati, the king has not inquired for us as servants."
59. Mayur Bhatta (Kayal & Deva 1974: 24): *subarner tangi*, and p. 25, *subarnna akuri*; see Sen 1971:s.v. *akuri*.
  60. See Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 410), where Hanuman reports to Dharma that Lausen has become "mad with the noose of *maya*'s delusion, with the tastes of pleasure he gets from his wealth, people, land, and women." For a discussion of north Indian oral epics that express a deeper ambivalence about the marriage of virgin warriors, see Hiltebeitel (2001: 96–107).
  61. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 155), Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 181). [Note that in Cattopadhyaya 1938 what has been printed as "*soras kanda: Moyna basana pālā*," (pp. 147–57), is out of place. It should precede the "*pancadās kanda: Kanur mahima pālā*," (pp. 133–47).]
  62. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 351–3). Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 155–6) adds that the lenient revenue demand of Lausen had depopulated Gau and that Lausen had become its raja; cf. Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 182).
  63. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 353–8), where the scheme is the suggestion of the goddess, whom the minister has worshiped in this time of danger. Compare Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 156–7).
  64. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938:143–4), Kālu called Karpur'dhal a "jungly *sala*" (brother-in-law) for not paying the king his taxes.
  65. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 401). Note a possible contrast to Khullana's wedding in *Caṇḍī Maṅgal*, (Sen 1975 *pad* 208: 120–1); see Curley (2001: 322–7).
  66. When the minister surrounds Moyna in Lausen's absence, both Kālu and Kalinga fail to worship the goddess before undertaking battle with him, and before they are able to engage the army in battle, both find it necessary to commit suicide.
  67. Hiltebeitel (2001: 96–101, 105–07, 153–92 *passim*), describing "the heroine who represents the goddess and the land, and who exhibits the goddess's powers of revival and revenge" (p. 192).
  68. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 480): After the marriage, the senior co-wife, Kalinga, asks Kanara to "meet" their husband to prevent his



- going to war against Ichai Ghosh. Kanara declines, arguing that it is close to her own “black wedding night [the second night of a wedding] when it is dangerous for a wife to serve her husband,” and that it should be the duty of Kalinga as the senior co-wife. According to Ghanaram, Lausen’s son Citrasen was conceived then.
69. Ghanaram first describes the decrepitude of his age: his flesh hangs from his bones; he hasn’t a trace of a tooth. Then he describes how the king is utterly overwhelmed by desire in the public space of the court: he abandons wisdom (*sumati*) and becomes subject to foolishness (*kumati adhin*); he “eats shame” (is completely shameless) in conversation in the assembly.
  70. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 415). Ram’das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 159a, 162) suggests a similar moral problem in the minister’s repeated oath that he will not eat until he has accomplished the king’s marriage before that very sunset, because he evidently will employ any means necessary to fulfill this oath.
  71. According to Ram’das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 160a), by offering remission for 50,000 rupees worth of taxes which were due to be sent (*ir’sal*) to Gaur. Kanara accuses her father of being “greedy for wealth.”
  72. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 418–20). Ram’das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 161a), has them reply with a clever double entendre that he “lives” (has lived/will live) at most for only two years”: *barajor maharaja bachar dui jiye*.
  73. Sen (1975: *pad* 175: 103–4). Note especially the unusual mention of a garland of China roses, instead of a garland of sandals.
  74. Some features of her comedy may have been borrowed from Persian story-telling traditions, cf. Stewart (2004: 3–21).
  75. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 428–9). Compare Kanara’s reaction upon first hearing of the proposal in Ram’das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 160a): “Where you would sell me, there indeed I will be sold” [*yekhane becibe go bikaba seikhane*]. The expression may be proverbial.
  76. According to Ram’das Adak, Haripal called his daughter a “woman who defiles the lineage” (*kul’pamsula*) for rejecting a proposal which he had accepted.
  77. Ram’das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 164b) has Kanara’s maidservant say, introducing the contest with the iron rhinoceros, “Whether grasscutter or slave or even Candal or foreign Muslim, I will honor and garland as groom whoever cuts the rhinoceros in two.”
  78. The idea that performance of rites at the groom’s house, before the groom’s party had arrived at the bride’s house, made the wedding “half-accomplished” and irrevocable is contrary to statements of

authoritative *Dharmasastra*, which make a marriage irrevocable only with completion of the couple's rite of taking seven steps around the sacred fire. See Kane (1973–1977: vol. 2, part 2: 538–41).

79. Gauresvar's first wife is Lausen's mother's sister; the relationship is extended to Kanara as her putative co-wife. See Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938:166b): *masi bibha bhagina karibe kon laje*. Compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 447), where the fictive relation of a half-married Kanara to Lausen is not mother's sister but mother's brother's wife: *kon laje nili bar'mala . . . sambandhe kanara tor mami*. Ghanaram thus has the minister fictively claim Kanara as his own wife; perhaps this can be understood as an unintentionally significant lapse (or, "mami" could be a scribal error).
80. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 462–4). The incident, perhaps because it was felt to be unnecessarily denigrating to Kālu's character, is not in Ram'das Adak.
81. Ghanaram has the goddess stop the battle (Mahapatra 1962: 468); so does Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938:169b). Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 236–7) has Lausen lose the fight between the two of them, because Śiva and the goddess jointly intervene to give Kanara the strength to lift him onto her saddle.
82. In Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 471) Lausen remembers to ask Dharma to revive the dead soldiers only as he is about to leave for Moyna after the wedding; in Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 170a) Lausen asks the goddess to revive them before the wedding. Of course the deaths of Gauresvar's soldiers would not have caused death impurities for raja Haripal, the father of the bride.
83. Narasimha Basu (Maiti c2001: 244). Compare Manik'ram Ganguli (Datta & Datta 1960: 423), where a similar but much abbreviated response is given by the four wives together rather than by Kanara alone.
84. *Ramayana, Yuddhakanda*, 101. The analogy is presented directly by Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 186b), and by Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 523). For Kālu's revival see also p. 526.
85. *Ramayana, Yuddhakanda*, 110; again the comparison is explicit in Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 535), and Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 188a).
86. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 540–43). In Ram'das Adak's account the goddess is explicitly shamed in front of Śiva (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 191a).
87. Hiltebeitel (2003: 124–8), and Pollock, "Introduction," *Ramayana of Valmiki* 3: (1990: 46–54). At least in its present form the Bengali *Ramayan* by Kṛttibas makes Ravana a convert to Rama devotionism

- before his voluntary death at Rama's hands. Cf. *Ramayan*, *Krttibas Pandit biracita*, *sampadana o bhumika* (Mukhopadhyay 1980: 292–3).
88. There may be some tension between Ghanaram's assimilation of Lausen to Lord Rama, and the need in a "hero's cult" for Lausen to sacrifice himself in the narrative, and to be sacrificed in "Lauseni" elements of the *gajan* ritual.
  89. For similar shifts in gender roles for women in *Caṇḍī Maṅgal*, see Curley 2001: 319–22.
  90. Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 210–214a). Ghanaram has Kālu test Lakhe before going to get liquor for worship. This somewhat improbable sequence makes the relevance of the test questionable.
  91. Saka died by a poisoned spear, according to Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 626). Compare Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938:219a), where Saka manages to tie up his spilling entrails and kill Cura his opponent before dying from a wound to his belly.
  92. Both authors agree on the use of bullets by Mahamad's party, whereas the Doms only have "hand-held weapons" (*hethar*, *hetyar*). Compare Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962:631), Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 220b).
  93. Cf. Harlan (1992:182–201), discussing the legends of Padmini and Hari Rani.
  94. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 701–03); compare Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 241b–242a), where Lausen suggests that the minister should place himself upon the allegedly "divine" stake, and so obtain heaven, and the minister, forced to act in accord with his own explanation, substitutes his sons.
  95. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 702–04); compare Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 242a), where Rañjābatī complains that Lausen has been as cruel as an unreasoning animal in allowing the sinless baby to be killed, with whom he had no quarrel, in place of Mahamad. In this account Lausen afflicts the minister with leprosy because he had set fire to Moyna while invading it. In general, in Ram'das Adak's account Lausen is more emotionally involved in the final conflict between him and the minister than in the account of Ghanaram.
  96. For representative statements about the impurity of leprosy, see *Dharmasutra of Apastamba* 2:17.21, *Dharmasutra of Gautama* 15:18, *Dharmasutra of Vaisistha* 11:19, 20:44, in Olivelle 1999.
  97. Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962:710–12) and Ram'das Adak (Cattopadhyaya 1938: 243b–244b) agree that after death Kālu will become a spirit (*jhapar*, *jhapar*). Ghanaram adds that this is a "lineage godling" (*kuler debata*) of Doms, and that they will worship him with

offerings of meat and wine. Ram'das Adak adds that he will dwell in the treetops. I am indebted to Ralph W. Nicholas and Aditi Nath Sarkar for the information that in Midnapur *jhap'ri* are mischievous spirits who dwell in bamboo groves and who may shower intruders with their urine. Ram'das Adak states that after death Lakhe will become a Sasthi (goddess of childbirth) who dwells at the foot of a banyan tree.

98. See, for example, Ghanaram (Mahapatra 1962: 477). Lausen, arguing that he must obey the summons to battle against Ichai, says, "If the king becomes angry, father, he will take our royal city; there is no use in being dependent on another (*paradhin*), another's servant (*cakuri*)."
99. Kālu does have a separate body of legends among Doms. Cf. Briggs (1953: 42–49); Risley (1981: 241).
100. For descriptions of folk songs (*chara*) with themes related to important parts of *Sibayan* texts, and which are or were recited during the Śiva Gājan, see Bhattacharya (1975: 194–5).

